WHY DID HE WED HER

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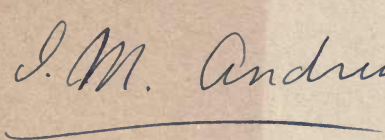
BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH



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Why Did He Wed Her?

A NOVEL

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Em," "Em's Husband," "For Whose Sake," "Lilith," "The Unloved Wife," Etc.

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WHY DID HE WED HER

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WHY DID HE WED HER?

CHAPTER I

IN THE ATTIC

"PALMA, will you give me the legal right to care for you? Will you have me for your husband?" he asked, gently taking her hand and bending over her.

"Oh, sir, do you mean it? Can you mean it?" she breathed, gazing up in his face with childish frankness, surprise and delight—the failing light kindling in her dark eyes, the fading color flushing in her wan cheeks.

"I do mean it, dear child. Will you give yourself to me?" he asked, smoothing her dark hair with his jeweled hand.

"Yes, oh, yes, if you want me; but I am such a poor creature," she answered, holding out to him her wasted hand and smiling faintly.

"So be it, then," he said, lifting the little hand to his lips.

"What a mockery! Sir, you must be mad," severely spoke a woman who stood beside the poor invalid chair in which the fading girl reclined, and over which the fine gentleman leaned.

She was right.

It did indeed seem a mockery—a cruel, bitter, insulting mockery.

For the scene of this startling proposal of marriage was in the rear room in the attic of an old tumbling-down tenement house in the lowest and most thickly crowded quarter of the city.

The one dormer window in the sloping roof looked out

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upon a jumble of dilapidated buildings with tottering walls, rickety sashes and broken doors, and down into squalid back yards, from which arose the pestilential stench of decaying garbage.

This Gehenna was full of people whose look was scarcely human—creatures in every stage of sin, disease and suffering; and from its depths as from the sulphurous Abyss of Styx, borne up in the fever-laden air, arose the wails of children, the plaints of women and the growls of men.

From further off came the deafening and incessant rattle and thunder of traffic and machinery.

Such was the hell around the tall old tenement house.

Within the poor back attic room all was clean and quiet. The stench and noise from below scarcely reached its height.

It was a room of about twenty feet square at bottom, but the back roof sloped from the boards halfway across the low ceiling. The bare walls were freshly whitewashed, the bare floor cleanly scrubbed.

The dormer window in the back roof was shaded by a clean white curtain.

Opposite the window, at the upper end of the room, stood a little box iron stove, with its low pipe thrust through a hole in the chimney, cold now in the warm spring weather. To the right of this, in the corner, stood a rude cupboard made of two pine boxes, placed one on top of the other, open in front, and provided—the upper one with a few pieces of cheap crockery, and the lower with a few cooking utensils. To the left, in the corner, stood a poor little cheap sewing machine—idle now, these many weeks, since the work had fallen from the failing hands of the fair young seamstress.

On the right side of the room, with its head against the wall, stood a small, single cot-bed, covered with a patchwork quilt of many colors. To the right of this stood an old bureau, with its top covered by a white cloth. On it lay a Bible, a prayer book and a hymn book. Above it, on the wall, hung a crucifix. To the left was a pine table, also covered with a white cloth.

Opposite the foot of the cot, across the width of the room, was the door leading into the passage, and on each side of this door stood a wooden chair

Such was the scene in which our drama of life opens. As for the actors:

The first speaker was a man in the morning of life, health and strength; a tall, handsome, stately blond, with fresh complexion, blue eyes and silky, yellow hair and mustache. He was perfectly dressed in a day suit of gray tweed. He was an *elegante* and an aristocrat from head to foot.

She to whom he spoke was a young girl scarcely past childhood, a *brune* brunette, with a thin, dark face, large, cavernous, dark eyes, and a wilderness of curling, dark hair wandering all over her head, neck and shoulders. The fires of fever kindled in her hollow eyes and burned in her wasted cheeks. And yet she was a creature of wondrous beauty even in decay. She was clothed in a faded blue wrapper, and lay back, propped with pillows, in an old arm-chair near the window.

The last speaker was a woman of middle age, with a tall, spare form, a pale, careworn face and iron-gray hair, which she wore parted plainly over her forehead and screwed up into a tight little knot at the back of her head. She wore a rusty gown of black alpaca, without collar or cuffs to relieve it.

"Why should it be a mockery, Mrs. Pole?" inquired the young man, dropping the hand of the girl and drawing himself up.

"It is all nonsense, and worse than nonsense. And you ought to know it, sir. The child is too young to marry, anyhow, if she was ever so well and strong. And now just look at her. She is—— Oh, you needn't stare at me and shake your head, sir! She knows her state. She is fully reconciled to it. The minister has been with her every day for a week past. She is a young saint, prepared for Heaven, sir, not a girl ready to be married. No, sir. 'For of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' "

Cleve Stuart did not answer this, but turned and took again the hand of the girl and looked in her face.

She raised her brilliant dark eyes to his with a deprecating glance, and then replied to the woman:

"Don't, don't, dear nurse; you make me ashamed! I a saint! Oh, far from it. Not fit for the kingdom; only hoping in the Father's mercy through His Son."

Cleve Stuart silently pressed her hand.

"But she is right in one respect, sir," continued the girl. "I do know my condition, and I am reconciled to it. The Father's will be done," she added.

"My dear child, 'while there is life there is hope,' even for the aged. And you are young, in the earliest springtime of life. With a change of scene, pure air, good food and devoted attention, such as I would be sure to give you, day and night, health and strength would return to you. And you have said that you will give me the legal right to devote myself to you in this way."

"Yes, I said so, not because I hope to get well, but because I do want you to be with me always during the little time I have to live, even to the last of earth. I fear this is very selfish of me," she added deprecatingly.

"No, no, my child, there is no selfishness in your wish, and it shall be granted," he said, again caressing her dark hair with his hand.

Observe, my reader, that there was a touch of pity and benevolence in his words and manner toward this failing girl; but there was no tone of love or passion in either. Yet she did not perceive the absence of them.

"You are so good, so very good to me. God bless you!" gratefully replied the girl.

He lifted her hand to his lips, and arose and took his hat and said:

"I will go out now and fetch a minister and a carriage for you. We will be married immediately, and then I will never leave you again. I will take you at once out of this miserable place and carry you, by easy stages, to the country, among the mountains and the forests, where you can have fresh air and cool breezes and breathe the health-giving fragrance of the pines. I will be back here within the hour."

She put up her hand to stop him, and then said pleadingly:

"Oh, no, sir; no, please; not this day—not this of all days!"

He hesitated in perplexity.

"But why not this day? Why not this hour? The sooner we are married the better, I think," he said; for looking down in her wan face, and hearing her faint voice,

he thought her days—perhaps her hours—were numbered; and, "if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well 'twere done quickly."

"But to-day is Good Friday," said Palma gravely.

"Oh!"

"And we could not be married on Good Friday, you know."

"Ah!"

"I should think not," put in Mrs. Pole.

"But why not? People sometimes marry even on the Sabbath day. Why not then on Good Friday, I should like to know?" inquired the young man.

"Sunday is a day of resurrection and rejoicing, when it is well for people to marry and to christen and to be happy. But Good Friday is a day of humiliation and mourning, and I don't know how anybody can have the heart to marry and be happy on such a day; no, sir, I don't. As if they could not wait for Easter, which is so near, too. And when one would think the joyful time would add more joy even to the marriage," replied the woman.

"What do you say, Palma?" he inquired.

"I cannot marry on this day of sorrow, sir," she answered gravely.

"To-morrow, then?"

"Oh, no! That would be almost as bad. But on Sunday, after the morning service, if you will."

"Very well, little devotee. It shall be as you please. On Sunday, then, between the morning and the afternoon service, I will claim your hand," he said cheerfully.

"Oh, how vain! Sunday is three days off yet. And the doctor says—— Now, there, sir! You needn't look at me so significant. I tell you she knows her state just as well as I do, and a deal better than you do. And she ain't a bit afeard, nor likewise troubled in her mind. If she was like other folk I'd hold my tongue about her illness, or else, maybe, tell her flatt'ring lies to cheer her up. But there! she ain't a bit like other folk, no way you can fix her; and so I speak plain before her, as I wouldn't before others," said the woman confidently.

The young man repeated his trite truism: "'While there is life there is hope,' Mrs. Pole."

"Not always, sir. You don't care to say it. It ain't so

in this case. Here is life, but no hope on this side of Jordan; not one bit. And she knows and submits to the will of the Lord. Her hope is beyond the river. She knows that for her 'to die is gain.' And she is glad to go, sir. I heard her tell the parson so yesterday. She is glad to go, I tell you, sir," persisted the woman.

But then the fading girl spoke.

"Oh, no, nurse! Not glad to go. Resigned, submissive, but oh! not glad!" she cried in an impassioned tone. "Not glad, now that you are here!" she added, turning her dark eyes on the young man. "I would like to live now. Oh, indeed I would, if the Lord were willing."

"Dear little Palma, you must live! You shall live!" murmured Cleve Stuart, smoothing her hair with his hand, and speaking from the pity, not from the love of his heart, and deceiving himself into the belief that he spoke in all sincerity.

"I thank and bless you! I know I need not die if you could keep me alive," she murmured gratefully; but her voice was very faint.

"I think you had better go now, sir. I do, indeed. All this talk has tired her so much she is almost exhausted and needs rest," said Mrs. Pole.

Stuart took up his hat, but Palma held out her hand imploringly.

"Oh, don't leave me! Stay with me as long as you can. Please do!" she pleaded.

"I would stay with you always if I might, dear child," he gently replied, drawing a chair to her side, sitting down, and taking her hand tenderly in his own and keeping it there.

"It's all wrong! all wrong! all wrong!" Mrs. Pole remarked, shaking her head.

"No, nurse. See! I can lean back in my chair and close my eyes and sink to sleep so contentedly with my hand in his," said Palma, smiling placidly.

"Well, I hope you will be able to get a good rest before the parson comes, anyhow," sighed the woman.

"Is the minister coming here to-day?" inquired the young man.

"Of course he is. He comes every day. But there was

service in his church this morning, so he will be here this afternoon."

"Then I shall submit to him the question of marriage on Good Friday, and try to persuade him to perform the ceremony before he leaves the house."

"Well, sir, I suppose you have some motive or other for the very strange deed you want to do, but I am blessed if I can guess what it is. Howsoever, if you are able to explain your reasons to the minister's satisfaction and get him to marry you to this dying girl, then my responsibility will be over, and I wash my hands of it."

"I think I have already explained my reasons with sufficient clearness and candor to yourself. I have told you that I wish to wed this child that I may have the lawful right to have her under my immediate personal protection, to take her away from this miserable place, carry her to pure mountain air, and surround her with comforts and luxuries that may save or prolong her life. And I think these are good and sufficient reasons to be submitted to the minister in support of our immediate marriage, even though the day be Good Friday; and that the reverend gentleman will agree with me," said the young man.

But Palma lifted her eyes to his face—eyes full of sacred love—and said:

"No, no, he would not! He would not, indeed! He holds the day in such devout reverence. No, nor should he sanction the ceremony would I consent to it. I could not! I could not until Easter."

"Then, at least, in the meantime I must take you out of this unwholesome place. Mrs. Pole will perhaps go with you, and—we will be married on Sunday," he said.

Palma slightly bent her head in silence. She was showing signs of extreme weariness. Mrs. Pole came and shifted the pillows behind her back, made her comfortable in her seat, and then brought her a glass of milk from the cupboard.

When she had drunk it she sank back in her chair with a deep sigh, closed her eyes and dropped her arms by her side from sheer exhaustion.

"Now don't speak to her again for at least an hour, sir, please," said Mrs. Pole, as she went to wash and put away the empty glass.

Cleve Stuart nodded in silence, took the hand of the exhausted girl and held it in his own.

She seemed to have swooned into sleep, so still she lay, so low she breathed.

Mrs. Pole took up some needlework and sat at a little distance, sewing.

So more than an hour passed.

Day was declining. The setting sun sent his level rays through the old dormer window, glinting on the group formed by the sleeping girl in the old armchair, the watching young man seated on her right, and the sewing woman on the left, lighted it for a moment and then sank out of sight. The shades of twilight were falling, the attic room was darkening.

"I won't light a candle. It might disturb her," whispered Mrs. Pole.

"No, don't," replied Cleve Stuart in a low voice.

But just then the sound of footsteps was heard coming up the stairs.

"It is the parson, and now I suppose I must light the candle," said the woman, rising to suit the action to the word.

Then Palma opened her eyes and smiled, murmuring softly:

"Oh, how blessed it is to wake and find you here!"

"Have you rested, dear child?" inquired Cleve Stuart.

"Benignly," she murmured in a dreamy tone.

"And you feel better?"

"Oh, yes, thank and bless you. You have done me so much good by only sitting by me and holding my hand while I slept so sweetly."

"I would like to hold your hand through life, dear child."

A rap at the door and the sudden blazing up of the lighted candle stopped their talk.

Mrs. Pole set the candlestick on the top of the bureau and went and admitted the minister—a venerable figure, tall, thin, broad-shouldered and rather stooping, with a pale face and white hair and beard, and clothed, of course, in clerical black.

Young Cleve Stuart felt a sudden, irresistible impulse to avoid the reverend gentleman and the religious services.

He stooped and whispered hurriedly to Palma:

"I will go now, dear child, and leave you with your minister."

Mrs. Pole placed a chair beside that of the invalid girl.

Dr. Hawley seated himself beside Palma and began to speak to her.

Mrs. Pole hastily excused herself and left the room to run downstairs and try to overtake the young gentleman before he should have left the house. She ran down four pair of stairs before she overtook him at the street door.

"Sir, sir! One moment, if you please! I want to speak to you!" she exclaimed, almost out of breath.

"Well, what is it?" inquired the young man.

"I want to tell you what you wouldn't let me tell you in her hearing. That is, that the doctor says how she may live some weeks yet, and she may go off at any minute if excited or fatigued. And so I wanted to warn you, sir, about tiring of her by trying to take her out in the country. I think you had better make her as comfortable as you can in her own room up there. And plenty of money may do much even there, sir! But not to talk to her too much, or even talk before her too much either, as you did to-day. That's all."

"Mrs. Pole," said the young man, "I wish you would 'reck your own read,' as the old proverb advises. It is your conversation that depresses and discourages her, and is enough to insure her death, even if she had a fair chance of life."

"Oh, sir! sir!"

"As for me," continued Cleve Stuart, without noticing the woman's deprecating interruption, "I wish to get her out of this place as soon as I can do so, in the only way in which it can be done, by making her my wife. Here she has no chance to get well. Here everything is against her—foul air, loud noise, poor food, and as if all that were not enough to hurry a sick girl into her grave, she has your constant talk of her death. You will not let her think of life. You make her think of death all the time."

"That ain't so, sir. You do exaggerate most fearful. You do, indeed, sir, begging your pardon! Which, all the same, it is a pity she wouldn't talk of nothing else. She said she had nothing to live for. She said she wanted to

die. She loved to talk about Heaven and the Lord and the angels."

"Poor Palma! Poor, dear child! Well, Mrs. Pole, she has got something else to talk about and to think about now! And don't you try to change the new current of her thoughts, if you please! 'One world at a time,' Mrs. Pole. And, by the way, I had nearly forgotten! I am glad you followed me downstairs, if only for this," said Cleve Stuart, as he drew his *portemonnaie* from his pocket and took from it a banknote, which he placed in the hands of the woman. "Get what she needs to make her comfortable here for the night. I will see her very early in the morning. Now have you anything more to say to me, Mrs. Pole?"

"No, nothing but thanks, sir," replied the woman, who was staring at the note in her hand, which represented the largest sum of money she had ever seen in her life.

"Good-evening, then."

"Good-evening, sir."

And Cleve Stuart went out by the street door, which closed itself with a bang behind him.

Mrs. Pole still stood staring at the bank bill.

"Twenty dollars!" she murmured to herself. "Twenty dollars! I hope none of them other tenants seen him give it to me! They're allers a-leaning over the banisters a-watching everybody as comes and goes and everything as takes place. Lor'! I hope none of them seen him give me this. I should be afeard to sleep with it in the house. I know the grocery man round the corner will think I stole it and call a policeman when I go to change it. I know what I'll do. I'll get the parson to change it for me. I'll tell him all about it. But now I do wonder what this young gentleman—who is a tip-topper, it is easy to see that—means by wanting to marry this poor, dying girl? I'd give ever so much to know. What's his game? For a game it is. I know that much. It isn't for love. He's not in love with her. Lor', no! Who could be in love with such a poor wrack as she is? But what is it, then?"

She could not tell. She shook her head, gave up the conundrum and went upstairs.

Meanwhile Cleve Stuart had passed out of the house and into the squalid, reeking street where his cab was waiting for him.

With his scented handkerchief held to his face, he entered the vehicle and gave the order:

"Back! and drive fast!"

In five minutes they had turned out of the fetid street and into one of the finest thoroughfares of the great city, and rolled on between miles of magnificent stores, now brilliantly illuminated; so nearly do squalor and splendor jostle each other in the grand metropolis.

Cleve Stuart sat back on his seat, grimly reflecting on the scene he had just left.

"Oh!" he exclaimed aloud, striking the seat with his clinched fist, "what an accursed adventure is this that I am on! Why did I ever consent to it—why, ye gods?"

Why, indeed, did Cleve Stuart, the haughtiest and most fastidious man in the city, the lion of the clubs and the idol of the drawing rooms, the envy of the "dudes" and the admiration of the "dudines," the scion of a historical race who had been illustrious in the Old World for centuries before they were known in the New—a race who claimed kindred with the royal dynasty of that name—why did the proudest, handsomest, most elegant and most accomplished descendant of such a race seek a wife in the person of a poor young sewing girl, who was fading from life in the attic of an old tenement house?

Was it from misplaced love?

Not at all, for he was not in the least in love with her.

Was it from any obligation?

No, he was in no way bound to her.

From charity?

No, for charity might have ministered to the suffering girl's needs by many better means than matrimony.

From a sense of honor?

No, for his honor was in no way involved.

Was it to make atonement for any wrong, real or imaginary, done by him or any of his kin to her or to hers?

No, for neither he nor his had ever wronged either.

Was it to fulfil the conditions of some eccentric will?

Not at all, for he was in no way concerned in any will, nor did he ever expect to be so.

Had he been jilted or offended by his sweetheart or betrothed, and did he wish to avenge himself by marrying

instantly the very first woman who could be induced to accept him?

No, nothing of the sort. He was in "peace and good will" with all the world.

What, then, was the motive of this elegant young aristocrat for wishing to wed the poor, dying seamstress?

It would be easier to tell why she, in her extremity, accepted him.

It was for this true and simple reason: that she loved him—loved him only of all the human beings on earth; loved with all her soul, and had so loved him all her life. She was dying for his presence—though no one knew it—when he came to see her—and to save her, though he did not hope or even wish to do so.

Why, then, did he ask to wed her at all?

CHAPTER II

SOME LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT

CLEVE STUART was the only son of John Stuart, a cotton planter of Mississippi, who had married late in life Clara, daughter of Gen. Cleve, of Rockcrest, Virginia.

Their marriage was blessed with several children, all of whom, however, except the eldest and only son, died in infancy.

It was in the spring of the seventeenth year of Cleve's life that he embarked with his parents on the ill-fated steamer *Lucy Lee,* en route for St. Louis and Canada.

That boat, it is well known, perished by an explosion within sight of her landing. Among the lost was the wife of John Stuart, who was himself so fatally injured that he died soon after his removal to the Planter's Hotel, having first made a will leaving all his property to his son, and appointing his old college chum, Judge Barrn, of New York, sole guardian of the heir, trustee of the estate, and executor of the will.

The judge, called by telegraph, came as soon as steam could bring him to the bedside of his dying friend, received his last words, closed his eyes, and attended to his funeral.

When the last rites were ended the judge returned to New York, taking his ward with him.

The judge and his wife were an elderly and childless couple, but the former filled his time with law and politics, and the latter devoted hers to home, church and charities. They lived in a pretty suburban villa, fronting on East River nearly opposite Randall's Island.

Mrs. Barrn received the youth very kindly, and tried to make him happy.

Cleve's education was already well advanced, but as he was anxious to enter Harvard as soon as possible, Judge Barrn engaged a master of arts to come for a few hours every morning to prepare the student for the university.

His surroundings were very cheerful. There were fine saddle horses and carriage horses in the stables; there were vehicles of every kind, from the light sulky to the large barouche; there were rowboats and sailboats in the boat-houses at the foot of the lawn; and Cleve had the freedom of them all as if he had been the son of the house. In short, all that was possible was done for the benefit of the unhappy youth. But for a long time nothing could rouse him from the deep sorrow of his terrible bereavement.

One thing, however, interested him, through sympathy.

There was about the premises a little dark-eyed, dark-haired child, of about five years old, who seemed to belong to nobody. She always wore a short white frock, with a broad black sash tied around her waist, and black shoes and black stockings. She never entered the drawing-room or the dining-room, but she went about all the other parts of the house, as well as all over the grounds, "like a tame kitten."

She seemed to have divined or discovered the cause of Cleve Stuart's gloom. She would stand before him, with her small hands folded demurely on her bosom and her dark eyes fixed solemnly on his face, so often, that, at last, one afternoon, Cleve, seated on a rustic bench under a tree on the lawn, and seeing her in her frequent attitude, called out:

"Come here, baby."

She came promptly.

He took her upon his knees and inquired:

"What is your name?"

"Palma,. she replied.

"Palma?" he questioned.

" 'Es, Palma, tauce I tome Palm Sunday."

"Oh! Who is your mother?"

"My mozer is an ainzel in heaven."

"Oh! Poor little girl! Where is your father?"

"Wiz mother, him too," replied the child, without removing her grave dark eyes from the face of the youth.

"Why do you look at me so, Palma?"

"Tauze Ize so sorry for oo."

"Oh! You know, then, that I, too, have lost both my dear parents?"

" 'Es, I know; but if oo is vezzy dood oo will fine zem adain in heaven wiz ze Lord," solemnly said the child.

" 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' "—began the youth, but his voice failed and his eyes filled with tears as he pressed the little one close to his breast.

"Don't cwy. I love oo," she said, taking a tiny handkerchief out of a tinier pocket and beginning to wipe his eyes.

"If you love me, baby, you are the only one in the world that does—except my dog," he said, and bent his head and kissed the little, dark, upturned face.

Then suddenly, with a boy's scorn of "sentimentality," he put the child off his knees, arose and began to saunter on the paths of the lawn.

She followed him closely up and down, up and down, like a little poodle, until the tea bell rang.

Then both went into the house. He turned into the dining room. She disappeared.

"Who is that little child, dear Mrs. Barrn?" inquired Cleve, as he received a cup of tea from the hand of his hostess.

"Palma?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Hers is a sad story. She is the child of a runaway match. Her father was the youngest son of a North of England squire. He was also a cornet in the Tenth Hussars. He fell in love with a beautiful housemaid and madly married her. He was cast off by his family and ostracized by the officers of his regiment. He was obliged to sell out and come with his wife to this country, where they lived

on the price of his commission as long as the money lasted, hoping that his father might relent and help them; but in vain. When the money was gone he tried to get something to do, but equally in vain. They fell from grade to grade in the social scale, until they reached the low tenement in Rat Lane where I found them."

"It is the foulest part of the city," put in the judge.

"This was last fall, when typhoid fever was raging through all that district. All three, father, mother and child, were down with the fever. The father died first; then the mother. The child recovered, as you see. The poor woman had told me her story. After she passed away, in accordance with her wishes, I wrote to Squire Hay, of Haymore, England, and announced the death of his son and daughter-in-law and described the destitute condition of his grandchild. In the meantime I brought the girl home here to await events. I also brought away the papers relating to the marriage of the parents and the birth and baptism of the child, in case the grandfather might demand proofs of her identity. I need not have taken the trouble, for in about a month I got a letter from Squire Hay, in which he declared, in so many words, that he would have 'nothing to do with the housemaid's brat.' "

"Brute!" ejaculated the judge.

"So here she has remained ever since. I do not know what we shall do with her; but there is time enough to think about that, for she is only a baby," concluded Mrs. Barrn.

From this day the youth took a compassionate interest in the child. And as for her, she was, in the language of the household, "devoted to that boy."

As Cleve gradually recovered from the shock of his bereavement he occupied and amused himself more and more with the child. She was his little kitten, his pet bird, his favorite toy, and he was very good to her; but yet, while she loved and admired him as the most beautiful and wonderful creature the Lord had ever made, he liked her only just as he might have liked a kitten, a bird, or a toy.

Three years passed. Cleve Stuart, who had studied diligently under his private tutor, was prepared to enter college.

Palma, who had remained with her protectors, was a pupil in the nearest primary school.

It was midsummer again; and it was proposed that Cleve Stuart should enter Harvard as soon as the vacation was over.

Then, suddenly, the young man changed his mind and decided to go to Germany and enter the University of Bonn.

The judge, from motives of patriotism, and Mrs. Barrn, from promptings of affection, expostulated, but without influencing the youth's decision, and—as he was within a few months of his majority, when he would have full control of his money—the guardian withdrew his opposition and the ward prepared for his voyage.

"I do believe it will break Palma's heart. She has done nothing but sob ever since she heard Cleve was going away," said Mrs. Barrn to her husband.

"Oh, well, she will soon get over it," replied the judge, carelessly.

But the child did something else besides sob. She followed the young man up and down, up and down, weeping and pleading.

"Oh, Mr. Cleve, don't go! Oh, please don't go!" until he was almost out of patience with her, and but for pity would have turned upon her in angry remonstrance.

The day came when Cleve Stuart sailed for Europe. And the child Palma grieved herself into a fit of illness, from which she only recovered in time to re-enter the primary school at its re-opening.

Cleve Stuart had intended to stay but four years abroad, but he stayed seven. After his college course was completed, he began the tour, not only of Europe, but of the Eastern hemisphere as far as it was open to civilized travelers.

At the end of seven years he returned from Cairo and took up his abode in Paris, where he best liked to live. Here he spent the winter, and would have spent the spring, but that expected remittances did not arrive, notwithstanding that he frequently wrote and then cabled to ask why they were delayed. At length, in March, when his funds were growing alarmingly low, he made up his mind to return home.

He embarked on the French steamer *Leverie* from Havre to New York.

On his homeward voyage he met his fate in the form of the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and the first one whom he had ever loved—a goddess with a tall and fully developed form, perfect features and complexion, and golden brown hair, and amber brown eyes, and a manner and expression that were simply irresistible.

With the gentleman and the lady both it was a case of fascination at first sight. Each seemed to lose sight of all their fellow passengers in their mutual absorption.

With the air, manner and costume of a wealthy woman of fashion, she was simply an accomplished and well remunerated governess who was traveling with a rich family, in charge of their girls. She was, besides, several years older than her lover. But Cleve Stuart did not care for all that.

To him she was a princess, a goddess, and he metaphorically lay at her feet and lifted adoring and worshiping eyes to her beauty and divinity.

By the time the *Leverie* had half crossed the Atlantic, Cleve Stuart and Lamia Leegh were engaged to be married and much of their lives planned out.

They were to be united as soon as convenient after reaching New York.

Then they were to go first to Niagara and the Thousand Islands, and then to divide their time between the mountains, the seaside and the islands of the North.

They were to return to New York in the autumn, proceed to Washington in the winter, and in the beginning of the new year go to the South and settle down on his beautiful plantation on the banks of the Mississippi.

This last item in the program was what pleased the lady best. To be the mistress of a great Southern plantation, was, in her estimation, quite equal to being sovereign of a little German grand-duchy.

Oh, dear!

They both certainly knew that within the last seven years civil war had shaken the country to its foundation; but neither suspected how it had ruined the plantations of the South.

When the steamer reached New York the lovers temporarily parted.

Lamia Leegh went with her employers to their splendid mansion on Fifth Avenue.

Cleve Stuart went to a hotel.

Within a few hours, by anxious inquiries, he learned the changes wrought by the war. The emancipation and the exodus had left his acres uncultivated for years, so that no revenue had come from them. The remittances that had been sent out to him during that time had been spared from his late guardian's own income, though the recipient of them never suspected the fact.

These remittances had only ceased when the old judge suddenly left this world to join his wife, who had gone just before him to the Better Land.

He could get no news of Palma Hay, who, he remembered, would, if she should live, be now about fifteen years of age.

It was a great shock suddenly to find himself reduced to poverty. He had scarcely courage to go and tell his betrothed of their misfortune.

He went, however; found her in her employer's house, as handsomely dressed and as luxuriously lodged as if she had been the princess she looked.

He told her all, and then added:

"It will take time, labor and a fortune to restore the ruined plantation; to rebuild the houses, mills and barns burned down by the soldiers; and to reclaim the land and bring it under cultivation. And I cannot hope to do this at present. Yet I am not quite penniless. I have a few hundred dollars; and I mean to seek employment. Also, I shall study law. I think I should do well as a barrister. And you, my queen, would be my greatest inspiration to effort. Lamia, I love you so entirely! Have you the courage to marry a poor man?" he asked, or rather prayed, with all his soul in his eyes and tone.

She hesitated long before she answered, though he kept his eyes fixed upon her in silent beseeching. Then at length she said, with deliberation, and in a cool tone, with studied words:

"No, Cleve, I have not the courage to do the man I love so great a wrong. Neither you nor I could bear poverty for a day. We both have refined, elegant and fastidious tastes. We love ease, splendor and luxury. We must wait for fortune to bestow wealth before we can think of marriage."

He looked at her in pain and surprise. Her words and manner shocked and wounded him. He doubted her love and suspected her motives. And yet he loved her—or thought he loved her—so much that he could not yield his point. He pleaded, argued, persevered for a long time, but to no purpose. She was as firm as a rock in her decision.

"At least—oh, Heaven! you will let me see you often, or I shall go mad!" he cried.

"You may see me every day, if you like. Why not?" she answered.

With that privilege he was forced to be content.

He did see her every evening in the week, and he went to the park with her on Saturdays, and to church with her on Sundays. And so some weeks passed.

On one Thursday afternoon, about the middle of April, and some six weeks after their arrival in New York, when he took her, as usual, to Central Park, she drew him to a secluded part of the grounds, where they sat down together on a bench.

She glanced right and left and all around to assure herself that no one, not even a park policeman, was in hearing, and then she dropped her voice, and said:

"You remember the little girl Palma, whose story you told me that night on the deck of the steamer?"

"Yes; of course! What of her?" inquired the young man in surprise.

"I have news of her!"

"Of Palma!"

"Yes, certainly."

"You?"

"Why, yes."

"How? When? Where?"

"By the merest accident, the chance visit of a lady connected with the Children's Friends' Society. She mentioned the case of Palma Hay as the most interesting that had ever come under her notice."

"Where is the poor child now?"

"Wait, Cleve. Hasten slowly. She told her story just as you told it, up to the time of the death of Judge Barrn."

"Yes; and then?"

"Palma was left homeless and destitute by the loss of her last protector. The death of the judge had been so

sudden that no provision had been made for his young protégée, who had no legal claim to any of the little property he left, which was very little at the last, because the judge had been extravagant in his charities as well as in his style of living."

"Oh, I know! I know!" said Cleve, who remembered the remittances sent to him year after year by his old friend, and which the young man supposed to be from the revenues of his plantation, when, in fact, they came from the old judge's own pocket. "Yes, I know; but the child? What of the child?"

"She is not quite a child now; she must be nearly sixteen years of age. Well, when the establishment at Harlem was broken up, and the servants were all discharged, the young girl, having no place to go, was taken home by the laundress, who had rooms in a tenement house near Hester Street. This woman, Mrs. Pole, got work for the girl to do, and the latter sewed day and night until, as the woman told our visitor, her heart broke and her health failed. The doctors say she cannot live a week."

"Poor girl! Oh, poor, dear, tender little Palma! We must go to see her to-morrow, Lamia, and do all we can to smooth her passage to the grave!" exclaimed Cleve Stuart, in a sudden burst of pity.

"You must, but not I."

"Why not you?"

"Because it would do the dying girl no good to see an entirely new face beside yours. Shall I tell you what I think, Cleve?"

"What, my queen?"

"I think the girl learned your arrival in some way, and has been hoping and expecting and pining to see her old friend."

"Impossible, Lamia; the child has forgotten me long ago."

"I don't know. It may be only a coincidence; but the woman, Pole, said that her health began to fail about six weeks ago. That was about the time of the arrival of the *Leverie;* also, that her malady began with a strange, eager, expectant look, as if she were watching and longing for the sight of some one, until hope died, appetite and sleep failed, and health and strength succumbed."

"All fancy, my queen, all fancy. The poor girl is in a decline from physical causes, not mental nor moral. I will go and see her to-morrow. Poor little Palma!"

"I dare say you are right, Cleve," said Miss Leegh. Then, with a sudden change of subject, she exclaimed:

"Cleve, I have something else to tell you."

"What is it, my ladylove?"

"I think that fortune may at last smile on us—that is, if you have courage and address to court her favor."

"Lamia!—love!—tell me what you mean!" he eagerly demanded.

"Cleve, what would you do to insure our wealth and our union within a year from this time?" she inquired, earnestly looking him in the eyes.

"Do! What would I do? Anything!—anything under the sun that it was possible for me to do—except to commit a crime," he answered, excitedly, returning her gaze with an anxiously inquiring look.

"Crime would not be possible to you. Besides, there is no question of crime. But—would you enact a social solecism, a folly, for my sake?" she gravely demanded, without taking her eyes from his.

"A hundred thousand follies! Unnumbered and innumerable follies, to insure our marriage within a given time!" he exclaimed, in agitation.

She smiled, turned her eyes "off guard," and answered, coolly:

"I shall only ask you to enact one."

"It is done!" he cried.

"But it will be trying to you."

"I do not care!"

"It will put you in a false position for a while."

"Let it!"

"It will make you look ridiculous."

"Let it!"

"Well, then, I will put your love for me to the severest test I know."

"Put it to that test at once! Tell me what I am to do."

"If you really love me——"

"Yes! yes! Well?"

"Marry Palma Hay at once!"

The young man gasped for breath, and stared at the speaker.

"You would ask me 'Why?' I suppose, if your tongue did not cleave to the roof of your mouth. I will consider the question put to me, and answer it. This is why——"

And she placed a printed slip of paper in his hand.

CHAPTER III

A FIERY ORDEAL

CLEVE STUART, still shocked, perplexed and wondering, received the printed slip of paper from the hands of Lamia Leegh, and gazed at it in silence. It was a short advertisement, cut from the columns of a daily paper, and read as follows:

"NEXT OF KIN.—If this should meet the eyes of James Jordan Hay, third son of the late John Haywood Hay, of Haymore, Yorkshire, England, he is requested to communicate immediately with the undersigned, when he will hear something to his advantage. Walling & Walling, Attorneys-at-Law, Judiciary Buildings, 111 Star Street."

"Where did you get this?" inquired Cleve Stuart, looking up from the slip.

"I cut it from this morning's *Trumpeter,* Cleve. Are you still dazed? Do you not understand? This advertisement refers to the father of that poor Palma whose story you told me on the steamer," said Lamia, significantly.

"Yes, I see; but the man has been dead a dozen years or more," replied the young man, still troubled and confused in his mind as by the perception of an impending, irresistible temptation.

"Yes; James Jordan Hay is dead, sure enough; but—his only child is living—just now—she may not live many days, she cannot—and she is the heiress, in right of her deceased father, to Haymore Hall, and to personal property worth three times as much as the real estate," whispered Lamia, glancing around and dropping her voice, lest

the very leaves of the trees should hear and report her words.

"And she is dying of disease and privation in the attic of a tenement house!" breathed young Stuart, with a shudder.

"Yes."

"How do you know all this that you have told me?" he next inquired.

"Fortune favored me. She twined a golden chain of fairest fate. First of all, as it happens, I myself am a distant relation of the Hays. So when you told me the story of the young officer who gave 'all for love,' and thought 'the world well lost,' I became so much interested in it that I remembered every item and circumstance——"

"You never told me you were related to that family," Cleve interrupted.

"Why should I? The relationship was so very distant. Besides, when was I ever given to talking of myself?" demanded the lady.

"Never, my queen! Truly, never! I beg your pardon. Pray go on," said the young man, penitently.

"Secondly, as the sermonizers say, or the second strand in the three-plied cord of destiny, was the chance call of the district visitor, and her description of her last discovered and most interesting protégée, in which I recognized your little friend Palma."

"And, dearest, you never told me until to-day that you had a clew to her abode."

"Oh, thou unreasonable Cleve! I only learned the facts last night, and have not seen you since until now."

"Very true! I am a captious fool! Pray, pardon me, and proceed."

"The third strand in the golden cord of fate was found in the advertisement which you have just read. I saw it in the *Trumpeter* this morning; recognized in the man wanted the deceased father of poor little Palma, and moralized over the fact of the heiress of millions dying in the attic of a tenement. This, you know, being Holy Thursday, is a holiday of obligation with my ritualistic and high church patron. So I did not keep school; but put on my bonnet, took a cab, and, on the strength of my relationship to the Hays, of Yorkshire, I called on Messrs. Walling & Walling at their office to find out what my late cousin,

James Jordan Hay, was wanted for. I was detained in the anteroom, or outer office, so long, that at length I took a blank card from the rack over the mantelpiece and wrote my name, 'Lamia Hay Leegh.'"

"I never knew you had a middle name," young Stuart remarked.

"Oh, yes, I have, and it is Hay; but I dropped it because it spoiled the pretty euphonism of the alliteration—Lamia Leegh. However, I put the Hay in this morning, thinking that it would help me to obtain a speedy interview. And it did. In five minutes after I had sent in my card, I was ushered into the inner office, and received by the senior partner of the firm, a tall, portly, bald-headed, dignified man, who might have been a grand duke, only that grand dukes are too often small and insignificant looking men. Oh, I must not ramble on in this way!" suddenly said the lady.

"No, dear; though your 'rambling' is as musical as the warbling of the nightingale, I must beseech you to come to the point. Never mind the bald-headed lawyer," put in Cleve Stuart.

"Then I'll hurry on: He gave me a chair. I sat down, and told him I was a connection of the family, and then begged him that he give me information regarding the advertisement. He told me that the late Squire of Haymore had three sons. The eldest, Collin, had been thrown from his horse while hunting, and instantly killed. He had died unmarried. His second son, Cuthbert, was at that time in California. A messenger was sent out in quest of him, but returned with the news that he, too, had ceased to live, having fallen a victim to a malignant fever, then prevailing in San Francisco. There remained but the youngest son, James Jordan, who had dishonored his name by a low marriage, and had been discarded by his father. About a month since the old squire had died suddenly of apoplexy, and had left no will. Haymore had a rent roll of eight thousand a year, and must revert to the crown unless the heir could be discovered. Then Mr. Walling asked me if I could give him any information concerning the whereabouts of Mr. James Jordan Hay. I told him that I was sure the missing man was not in New York, but had not the remotest idea where he might be."

"Lamia!—my dear!" exclaimed young Stuart, troubled by this subterfuge and prevarication.

"Well, I told him 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' as the law directs. I was sure he was not in New York, was I not? And I had not the remotest idea where he might be. How could I? I could not know whether the poor departed fellow was in heaven or in—in the other place. No. I told him that my cousin, James Jordan Hay, had left New York several years ago, and had never returned, and that I did not know whither he had gone, as I had heard nothing from him since his departure. So the interview ended, unsatisfactorily on the lawyer's side, certainly."

"But, Lamia—dear Lamia—why did you mislead him?"

"For your sake, Cleve. Oh, my dear! don't you understand? I was so quick to see your interests, and to guard them. These lawyers must not know of the existence of this heiress until you have made her and her fortune your own. Nor must she know of her accession to wealth until she is your wife. She——"

But the young man had started from the side of his companion, and was striding up and down the flagged walk. He met a policeman, who, attracted by his wild manner, inquired:

"Is anything the matter, sir?"

"Go to the—— No, there is nothing the matter," concluded young Stuart, when he had suddenly checked himself in his rude profanity. Then he turned and went and sat down beside his companion. His heart and brain were in a whirl.

"What in the world ails you, Cleve? You look and act like a madman. What is it?" inquired Lamia, although she knew well enough.

"It is this horrible——" and his voice broke down.

"Why should you call it horrible? Now do, dear, be rational, and not fanatical. See here, Cleve——"

"I only see that I am capable of being a scoundrel, Lamia, and not worthy of your notice, or of anybody's!" he burst forth, passionately.

"Cleve!" she exclaimed.

"It is true! true!"

"You must not use such language in my presence."

"I am not worthy to speak in your presence!"

"Cleve! you do not love me!"

"Not love you? Oh, Heaven!"

"Then, if you do, pray, pray try to be calm and cool and reasonable, and listen to me. Will you?" she cooed and coaxed, caressing him with her soft hands.

"I have no choice but to hear and obey," he answered, in a tone made tragic by the conflict in his soul.

"See here, then. By the plan I propose there will be no harm done to anyone—least of all to the poor girl. She loves you with a foolish, fanatical affection that is killing her because it is not returned. She adored you in your youth and in her own infancy. She grew ill, almost unto death, when you went to Europe, as the wife of your guardian wrote you. She waited and hoped long years for your return, until she grew from childhood almost to womanhood. When she lost her benefactors, and was reduced to live in the attic of a tenement house, and work for her bread, she bore up bravely, still waiting and hoping for your return. You were the fairy prince of her childish fancy who was to bring her all things fair, and, most of all, love. But when at last she saw the watched-for ship telegraphed, the waited-for name heralded in the papers, and when she watched and waited day after day in vain, until her heart grew 'sick' with 'hope deferred,' her health and strength broke down, and a trifling cold developed into a fatal disease."

"Poor child! Poor child!" groaned the young man.

"Now, listen. There is not a hope of her recovery. You have not the power to heal her malady, but you may make her happier than she has ever been in her life, and you may prolong her existence. Will you have done her any harm? Surely not. Nor is there anyone else whom you would wrong by this plan? There is no other heir after her. She is the last of the Hays, of Haymore. If she die unmarried, the whole estate, real and personal, will go to the crown. Now, what does the Queen of England want with that? If you should marry her, on her death all her vast personal property would become your own, though the real estate might still, on her death, go to the crown. Come, Cleve, do not be fanatical. Marry this poor dying girl, and make her as happy as an angel for the few remaining days or

weeks of her life, and then receive your reward by enjoying her wealth all the rest of your days and mine—mine, Cleve!" And she placed her soft hand in his and gazed up into his eyes.

A fierce struggle was going on in his heart. This was the first great temptation he had ever experienced, and she was his tempter, and she possessed great power over him. Yet she did not conquer his scruples easily. She had to use all her arts, blandishments and sophistries persistently for hours before she could win from his shocked moral sense even a reluctant promise to think over her plan.

Then, as it was very late, she arose to leave the park. And with a deep sigh—a sigh given to his departing honor—he stood up and offered her his arm.

They walked on in silence until they reached the brown-stone mansion where the Vansitarts—Lamia's employers—lived, and which was but a short distance from the park.

At the door they paused to say good-night.

"You will be sure to go to see the girl to-morrow?" she inquired, uneasily.

"Yes; in any case I will be sure to go and see her," he answered, wearily.

"And you will come here and let me know the result?"

"That depends, Lamia. If I should let this black temptation pass, then I will return to you. If I should yield to it—if I should find excuse in my heart and conscience to marry this poor girl, from whatever motive—I must thenceforth devote myself to her exclusively."

"That is understood," assented the lady.

"And, under the peculiar circumstances, you and I must never meet, or even correspond, during the life of Palma, whether that life be short or long. We must be strangers."

"I do not see the necessity for that."

"You will see it if you reflect upon it," he gloomily replied; and then he said: "Good-night," and turned away from the house and walked on toward his hotel, his soul darkened by prophetic remorse, for an uncommitted sin, and disturbed by profound resentment against the beautiful and passionately beloved woman who was luring him on with the power of destiny. And in this mood he entered his apartment and retired to bed, but scarcely to sleep.

The next day Cleve Stuart took a cab and started on his

quest down Broadway; across to the Bowery; thence into a labyrinth or tangle of narrow, crowded and filthy bystreets, lanes and alleys, until he reached the tall, six-storied old tenement in the attic of which Palma Hay, the heiress of millions, lay dying of sickness less than of privation.

Leaving the cab and the astonished cabman—who had never found himself in such a place before—Cleve Stuart entered a very broad and very dirty hall, and went up a broad and dirty flight of stairs. Nobody had admitted him, and nobody had hindered him; only some heads peeped through doors or over banisters to see who he was. There were smells of suds and washing, and smells of cooking—boiled bacon and cabbage, and fried sausages—smells savory and unsavory—coming from the various rooms opening on the passageways of every floor as he went up. The noise of a quarrel came from one apartment; the sound of merriment from another; and the laughter of children from still another. As he went up from floor to floor the steps were narrower, and also cleaner, as if the dirt from the streets had been gradually shaken off the feet of the passengers.

On the attic floor a room at the head of the stairs was open, and in it was seated an old man making wooden pegs.

"Can you tell me if there is a person here of the name of Pole?" Cleve inquired of this man.

"In there, along o' the sick gal," replied the whittler, pausing a moment to point the blade of his penknife to the room opposite.

The door of this apartment was closed, but, at Cleve's knock, it was opened by a very tall, thin woman, with a sallow face, iron-gray hair, and clothed in a rusty black gown.

The young man instantly recognized the woman as a sometime servant of the late judge and Mrs. Barrn, and was simultaneously recognized by her—and by some one else also, it seemed, for a low cry of joy came from the inside of the room, but was half drowned in the noisy welcome of the woman.

"Lord sakes, Mr. Cleve, is it yourself? And how you have growed, and what a mustache!"

"So you remember me, Mrs. Pole."

"Of course, and why wouldn't I? Let alone the foties

you sent to the madam regular every year on your birthday. But that mustache is growed since the last, which was bare! They're both gone to glory, sir; both the old madam and the judge, as I reckon you know."

"Yes, yes," replied Cleve, with a sigh—"I know."

"But she have kept all the foties," added the woman.

It was needless to tell Cleve Stuart who "she" was. With a pang of conscience he inquired:

"Where is she? I have come to see her."

"Oh! come in, sir. She will be so glad to see you, the darling! She has been looking for you ever since she heard talk of your ship a-coming in."

"How is she?" whispered the young man.

The woman shook her head and muttered:

"Don't ask me, sir, please; but she's ready to go. Yes, she's ready to go!"

And then Mrs. Pole led the way into the poor but clean attic chamber, described in the first chapter of this story.

And there, propped up by pillows in the rocking-chair by the dormer window, reclined the lovely, dying girl. She wore a faded blue gown; her silky black hair flowed freely over head and shoulders; her little dark face was wasted by illness; but her large dark eyes were so brilliant, and her cheeks and lips so bright, that she was beautiful even under the shadow of death.

A cry of pity half escaped the lips of Cleve Stuart as he approached her chair.

She held out both hands to welcome him, and her face was radiating celestial light and joy.

He took her in his arms and kissed her, and laid her little head against his breast for a moment. The caress was impulsive, spontaneous, compassionate, and withal as pure and holy as if it had been bestowed on a little suffering sister.

"Are you so glad to see me, Palma?" he gently inquired, as he laid her back in her chair.

"Oh, so glad!" she breathed, with the sigh of profound content. And she held out her hands to him, as if mutely imploring him to take them.

He drew a chair to her side and seated himself, and took the little, emaciated hands and held them together in his own while he questioned her.

"Palma, did you wonder why I did not come to see you?"

She raised her brown eyes to his face—sweet eyes, free from reproach, full of faith, and answered:

"Yes, but I thought you were very busy and could not come, or else I knew you would have come."

"My child, I could not find you. You were lost to me in this wilderness of New York. Only yesterday I discovered your abode," he answered, with a twinge of conscience.

"I know you have come just as soon as you could, and oh! I thank you so much for coming."

"No, no, no, my dear, don't say that. It was my duty and my pleasure to come to you," he said, in a voice broken by pity and compunction.

"You are so good to come. You make me so happy. I am going to die soon; but I should not mind if I could only have you here sitting by me, holding my hand to the last, to the very last," she panted, tightening her clasp upon the hands that were holding hers.

It was then that Cleve Stuart, really forgetting all mercenary interests, found it in his heart and conscience to marry Palma Hay.

Why should be not make this poor child happy for the few remaining days or hours of her life?

It was then that he put to her the question with which this story opens:

"Palma, will you give me the legal right to care for you? Will you have me for your husband?"

Then followed the wondering, incredulous response of the delighted girl.

And then the scornful comment of the astonished woman.

And the scene ended in the solemn betrothal of the young gentleman to the dying girl, the appointment of their marriage to be solemnized on the following Sunday noon, and the departure of the bridegroom-elect to make preparations for the ceremony.

All this has been related in the first chapter of this history.

Now we will take up the thread of the narrative where we left it.

CHAPTER IV

"TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH"

CLEVE STUART arose very early on Saturday morning, and as soon as he had dressed and breakfasted he went in person to a livery stable, so that he might himself choose a capacious, easy carriage and steady horses to convey his delicate charge to the steamboat pier.

As soon as it was ready for use, he entered it and ordered the coachman to drive to such a number on such a street.

What the man thought of a fine gentleman driving in a fine carriage to such a locality passes conjecture. He touched his hat in silence and obeyed the order. Down Broadway, across to the Bowery, into a narrow side street, and then into a labyrinth of alleys he drove, and finally drew up before the tall, old tenement.

Cleve Stuart sprang out, entered the open door and ran up the broad old staircase, meeting on every floor the dirt, noise, odors and espionage that had greeted him on his preceding visit.

On the attic floor he found the same old man seated in his open room, making pegs. He passed the workman with a nod and rapped at Palma's door. It was instantly opened by Mrs. Pole and he entered the chamber.

Palma was seated in the same chair by the dormer window; but what a change had come over the child! She wore a neat crimson cashmere dress, which was evidently a relic of her "better days," and which suited her brunette beauty. Her glossy, curly black hair had been "done up" by the not unskillful hands of Mrs. Pole, and was now worn coiled in a rich mass at the back of her head, and rippling in short curls over her forehead. The feverish excitement of the preceding day had given place to a look of calm contentment.

She held out her hand to him with a placid yet radiant smile.

He lifted her fingers to his lips, drew a chair to her side, sat down and asked after her health.

"Oh, I feel so well. You have changed everything for me! You have changed me and the whole world around

me. I am no longer a poor, fading girl in an attic; I am a happy spirit in paradise," she fervently replied.

Cleve noticed now that Mrs. Pole was trying, silently, to attract his attention from the other end of the room where she stood, she also dressed in her Sunday's best—a well-worn, cheap, black alpaca.

Cleve pressed Palma's hand, and went and joined the woman.

"I wanted to tell you, sir, as I think it was the doctor changing the medicine and me changing the food as has helped her. He—the doctor, I mean—came yesterday after the parson had gone, and he found her that feverish as she was almost crazy; and he made up a sleeping draught for her to take the last thing. But I went out with some of that money you gave me and I got a good bottle of port wine, and a good, fat fowl, and I made her some chicken broth and give her a glass of the wine, full two hours before I give her the sleeper; and so, with it all, she has had a lovely rest, and never disturbed me once in the night, and she woke this morning better than she has been for weeks."

"Do you stay with her all night?"

"Oh, no, sir. But my room is next to hers, and there is only a wall between her cot and my turn-up, so if she wants anything in the night, all she has got to do is to rap on the wall, you see."

"Yes, I see. Did you tell the doctor—— By the way, who is her physician?"

"The poor doctor for the deestrict, sir—which his name is Dr. Ames."

"Ah! Did you tell him of—of my intentions toward Palma?"

"Yes, sir, I did; and he was properly taken aback, as much as I was."

"But what did he say about the matter?"

"Well, sir, he ast a lot of questions, which I answered as well as I could, and then he called me out into the passage and told me that if you had come two months ago and took her away and put her under sanitary conditions, you might have saved her life; but that now it is too late."

"But what did he say about the marriage?"

"Oh, that it would not matter, one way or the other."

"Is Palma able to be taken a short distance in an easy carriage?"

"Knowing your plans, sir, I ast the doctor that very thing, which he told me she would if placed in a comfortable position and driven slowly."

"Very well, then; get her ready as soon as possible, and do you, if you please, prepare to go with her and attend upon her. I will make it well worth your while, Mrs. Pole."

"Yes, sir, that I calculated on," said the woman. And she went and got a little crimson plush jacket, evidently belonging to the suit the girl wore, and put it on her; and then she put a little plush hat to match on her dark curls, and gave her a pair of well-worn black kid gloves.

When Palma was quite ready, Mrs. Pole completed her own toilet by putting on a black woolen shawl and a black straw bonnet.

Two large, cheap traveling bags stood side by side near the door.

"I bought 'em this morning, sir, out of the money you gave me, which one has got all her clothes in it, poor thing, and t'other mine. Mr. Pennyset, the old gray gentleman there, will take them downstairs for us for a dime; and you, sir, can help Palma. I must stay behind a minute to lock up, but I won't be no more."

Cleve Stuart obeyed orders by giving his arm to little Palma and supporting her to the door. But then, perceiving her extreme weakness, he lifted her up as if she had been an infant, and said:

"Put your arms around my neck, child, and rest your head on my shoulder, then you will not be tired."

Smiling happily, she complied. And so he carried her slowly down the stairs, stopping to rest her on each landing, unmindful of the curious heads peeping through the doors or leaning over the banisters, although he was giving the tenants in that building a subject for gossip that would last them forever, perhaps.

The old peg-maker, carrying the two traveling bags, and Mrs. Pole, bearing two pillows, overtook them at the foot of the last flight of stairs.

"You see, sir, as I fetched 'em for her. She must ride easy. I don't know, really, as a strong gentleman like you

can 'preciate the weakness of a girl in a decline," she explained.

"Oh, yes, I can. Go before me, please, and arrange the pillows in the carriage so I can lay her down in them," he replied.

And he followed, with Palma in his arms, and placed her in the nest the nurse had made for her.

The old peg-maker handed the traveling bags to the coachman, received a quarter from the young man, and turned to go into the house.

"Get in quickly, if you please," said Cleve, as he helped Mrs. Pole up to her seat beside Palma.

The good woman settled herself so as to afford a further support to the feeble invalid.

"Drive slowly to the Vestry Street pier," was the order given by Cleve Stuart, as he hastily entered the carriage and closed the door to escape the eyes that were peering from every window of the old tenement and the crowd that was collecting on the sidewalk, all wondering whether the girl in the carriage was an invalid on her way to a hospital or a lunatic being conveyed to an asylum.

The carriage moved slowly off.

Palma rested softly on her pillows, further sustained by the long, strong right arm of Mrs. Pole, which was passed behind them.

The girl's beautiful, dark face beamed with calm delight.

Cleve Stuart, seated opposite to her, contemplated her happiness with a satisfaction that almost quieted his conscience and restored his self-complacency.

"Palma, little one, do you know where you are going?" he gently inquired.

"No," she answered, shaking her head and smiling dreamily.

"Don't you wish to know, little girl?"

"No; I like to drift—drift—drift—out into the bright new world with you," she murmured, and held out her hand to him.

He leaned forward to take and press the little offering, and then let it go, and sat back in his seat.

The carriage drew up on the pier at the foot of Vestry Street.

The *Shaft* lay there, getting up her steam.

Mr. Stuart beckoned a porter to come and take the baggage, and then he got out and lifted Palma down.

Mrs. Pole followed, bringing the pillows, which she gave in charge of the porter, who was already loaded with the bags.

"I can walk—indeed I can walk a little way," said Palma, as Cleve Stuart attempted to lift her in his arms again.

"I think she can, sir, if we help her on each side," said Mrs. Pole.

And so between the two they walked the girl across the gang plank and on to the deck of the steamer.

April is not a traveling month, and so there were but few passengers on deck and plenty of room to arrange a couch made of pillows and shawls on one of the side benches.

Cleve Stuart and Mrs. Pole seated themselves before her. They were isolated, for there was no one else very near them.

In a few minutes the boat turned from her pier and steamed off on her trip up the North River.

"Oh, this is heavenly! heavenly!" murmured Palma, when they had left the city behind, and were running up the Hudson under the shadow of the Palisades. "Heavenly! Oh, thank God!"

Cleve Stuart patted her head and then got up and went forward to the saloon.

In a few moments he returned, followed by a steward bearing a tray with a mold of ice cream, a loaf of sponge cake, a bottle of champagne, and the necessary china, glass, silver, linen and so on.

Two flat-bottom chairs were placed together, facing each other, and the tray set upon them.

"Now, this is earthly, my dear child—earthly; but I hope it will be acceptable," said Cleve Stuart, when the waiter had left them, and he himself began to wait on Palma and her companion.

"Oh, how good you are to me! How very good! Oh, how I wish I could live now to repay you for all your goodness to me! But that is nonsense, and worse than nonsense; it is presumption, for if I were to live a hundred years I never could repay you. No, it wrongs pure, unselfish

goodness to talk of repaying it," she said, as she received the glass of wine from his hand.

Cleve Stuart could not meet the warm, dark eyes fixed so gratefully on him.

He turned away his head, sighed profoundly, and said:

"I am paid more than enough, and much more than I deserve, by seeing you so happy."

"And it is you who make me happy—you!"

She had left off calling him "sir," and could not yet bring herself to call him "Cleve"; she felt too near to him for the first form; too humble for the second; so that there was often a sort of awkwardness in her address.

He watched with satisfaction her enjoyment of the delights with which he had surrounded her—the beautiful day, the invigorating air, the grand scenery of the river, which grew more magnificent with every mile; and even her comfortable couch and luxurious luncheon were factors in her happiness and his own self-complacency.

"Well, now she do seem like another being, don't she, sir?" approvingly exclaimed Mrs. Pole, when their repast was finished, and a steward had removed the tray, and Palma lay back on her pillows smiling in delight.

"She does, indeed," assented Cleve Stuart. And within himself he said: "I do not seem to be doing or intending much harm to the poor child, do I now, my accusing conscience?"

Probably the inner judge made no encouraging reply, for the young man arose and began to pace the deck.

The *Shaft* had touched landings on both sides of the river, on her way upstream, and now she was nearing a landing on the east side.

"What a lovely, lovely place," said Palma, enthusiastically, as she raised herself on her elbow to gaze on the green wooded hills, rising one above the other, and having a shady road winding up among them and disappearing in the upper forests.

"We get off here," said Cleve, with a smile, as he approached his party. "What do you think of the place as seen from the boat, Palma?"

"Oh, it is lovely, and inviting. I should like to follow that mysterious road, up, up, up, to see where it leads."

"You shall follow it," replied Cleve, with a laugh at her childishness.

The boat touched the pier, stopped, was secured and the gang plank was thrown down.

There were but few passengers, for this was not the season for crowded boats.

"Come, my dear," said Cleve Stuart, assisting Palma to rise to her feet. She seemed stronger than when she left the city in the morning.

"Your arm will be sufficient, Cleve," she said, forgetting herself and calling him by his first name for the first time in her life. "I feel sure that I can walk with only your support," she added, as she joined him.

"Then, I'll load myself down with these shawls and pillows," said Mrs. Pole, picking up the articles in question and preparing to follow.

In the after part of the lower deck they found their bags and also a porter who was glad to take charge of them and all the luggage "for a consideration" in the shape of a half dollar.

So they went on shore, Cleve Stuart really supporting Palma's weight as she paced slowly by his side.

There were two hacks on the pier, the drivers of both vociferous for fares.

Cleve took the best-looking of the two, and at the same moment the only other passenger besides our own party that landed from the boat, hired the other, and peace was restored.

Mrs. Pole arranged the pillows in the carriage and Cleve Stuart lifted Palma and placed her in her seat, and then handed up the elder woman.

"Drive to Forest Hill," was the order he gave to the hackman, and, having given it, he entered the carriage and seated himself on the cushious opposite Palma and Mrs. Pole.

"Now do you know where you are going?" he inquired of Palma, who was gazing dreamily out of the window into the deep woods that bordered the road and met overhead, almost shutting out the sky and darkening the way.

"I only know I am being wafted up into beauties, and delights, and mysteries that I do not want to analyze. I am so happy! So happy."

"Oh, you are a little fanatic—a fanatic in love, in piety and in poetry," said Cleve Stuart, bending forward and patting her hand in so much sympathy with her and satisfaction with himself that he forgot the twinges of his conscience for the time.

Up and up through the winding road they climbed for miles, without seeing a house, a chimney, a field, or any sign of human habitation or cultivation.

Suddenly the road led them into a forest glade, and up before a large, oblong, white house, of three stories, with piazzas all around every story from ground to roof, and with many outbuildings—stables, sheds and arbors—in the rear.

"Oh, what a lovely, lovely place! It is a fairy palace in the woods!" murmured Palma, gazing with delight upon the scene.

"It is a summer resort for families and schools in the season, but the season has not yet opened; so the place is very quiet, and will suit you well," said the young man, as he lifted the girl from the carriage and placed her in a quaker chair on the front piazza.

Simultaneously a waiter came out from the hall and a hostler came up from the stables.

Mrs. Pole joined Palma on the piazza, and Cleve went back to the carriage to settle with the driver, but was told that the vehicle belonged to the inn and would be "put in the bill."

Then, leaving his charge and her attendant still sitting in the straw chairs on the piazza, where it was very pleasant, he went into the office of the house to arrange for the accommodation of the two women, and to explain that he himself should be obliged to return to New York that afternoon.

The clerk—who was also the host of this pleasant, unpretentious house, in which there was no bar, but only an office where books were kept and keys were hung—informed Mr. Stuart that at present there were no guests in the place, except a few quiet old ladies and gentlemen who were permanent boarders, never leaving for more than a week at a time, and a middle-aged doctor and his young wife, who were on their honeymoon.

Cleve was pleased with the fact that there was a physi-

cian in the house, and said so, adding that his young charge, whom he had brought to the place for health, might need treatment.

Upon further inquiry, he learned that he could now secure a spacious, double-bedded room on the ground floor, for the use of the invalid girl and her attendant, and where they would have no stairs to climb; and that they might have their meals served privately in a communicating parlor.

At all of this Cleve Stuart was so pleased that he asked if his party might see their lodgings at once, and, being answered in the affirmative, he went out and brought in Palma on his arm, with Mrs. Pole following in the rear.

The landlord—whose name was Lemuel Lull, and who was by no means the typical host, with the round body and red face, but a tall, slender, yellow-haired man, with a freckled skin, blue eyes and a pleasant smile—bowed to the two women, and led them into—such a delightful room!

It was a spacious chamber, in the right-hand front corner of the house, with two French windows opening on the front piazza, and two sash windows opening on the side piazza. There was a dressing bureau, with looking-glass, between the front windows, and there was an open fireplace, with a pretty mantelpiece, between the side windows. There were two white beds, in opposite corners, at the back of the room. The floor was stained dark brown and was highly polished, and furnished with pretty, bright, variegated rugs, laid down beside each bed, and before the dressing bureau, the fireplace and the sofa. The walls were white, and the windows, sofa and easy-chairs were draped with white.

"Oh, what a delicious room! One might live and die here!" softly murmured Palma, dreamily, as she sank into the depths of a yielding easy-chair, and gazed out upon the environing green wood, seen here through four windows at once.

Mrs. Pole, who had dropped her pillows on the sofa, now took off the girl's hat and jacket, and hung them in the wardrobe that stood between the two beds.

"What will you have for tea, Palma?" inquired Cleve.

"Anything at all. I am so happy. You are so good to me."

"Tea and bread and butter, new-laid eggs and fresh milk and broiled spring chicken," said Mrs. Pole, returning from the ward and speaking for her charge.

Cleve gave the order.

Half an hour later the dainty repast was laid in a pleasant little sitting room on the same floor.

Palma was wheeled there in her easy-chair.

"This is the first time the child has sat at the table for two months. And look at her! She bears it so well. It is a miracle, Mr. Stuart, and you have wrought it," said Mrs. Pole, as she poured out the fragrant Japan and served it around.

Palma ate with a good appetite, enjoying to the utmost her food, her companions and her surroundings. And Cleve Stuart's conscience was at rest.

When tea was over, and Palma's chair was wheeled onto the piazza in front of her own windows, and while she sat watching the slanting rays of the sinking sun, that seemed to be kindling little fires here and there amid the thick foliage of the forest, Cleve came to her side, and asked: "Palma, my dear, are you really, really happy?"

"Oh, so happy! And you have made me so. You are so good. And, oh, I do love you so much!" she warmly responded, giving him her hand, which he pressed to his lips.

And then Mr. Cleve Stuart even began to think that perhaps he was rather a good sort of fellow, and that he certainly could and would make this grateful little creature happy for the short time she might have to live.

When the sun had set, he wheeled her back into her room, and then he bid her good-by for a few hours, saying, as he held her hand:

"You know, my dear little girl, that when I return here I will bring a clergyman with me, so that before this hour to-morrow I shall be your husband, with the right to stay with you always and take care of you as long as you live."

"Yes, I know! Thank God! Thank God! And thank you, Cleve! Oh, you are so good, and I do love you so much—so much, Cleve."

And then he kissed her good-by, and left her seated at the front window in charge of Mrs. Pole.

She watched him come out of the front door and enter the same old hack that had brought them to the house.

Still, she watched the carriage that contained him, until it rolled away and was hidden in the wood.

Then she turned to her companion, and murmured, dreamily:

"Oh, Poley, dear, this seems like a dream. It is too good to be true. Too good to last. I'm afraid—I'm afraid something will happen."

"Nonsense, child. That's because you have just seen him go. It is always solemnizing to see a friend go away; but, you know, he will come back to-morrow."

"Yes, if nothing should happen to prevent him," she said, with a heavy sigh. And a shadow fell over the brightness of her face.

Was it the shadow of coming events?

Cleve Stuart returned to New York by train, and reached the Grand Central Depot at about nine o'clock.

He took a Broadway stage, and rode to his hotel.

When he entered the office, and asked for the key of his room, the clerk who reached it down from its peg also handed him a letter.

He saw with surprise that it was directed in the handwriting of Lamia Leegh; for this was a breach of their compact, that all epistolary correspondence, as well as all personal interviews, should cease between them for the present.

The letter had no postmark, therefore it had been sent by a messenger, and in the corner was written and underscored—immediate. It was also sealed with a plain stamper.

"When did this come? Who brought it?" inquired Mr. Stuart, as he turned it over in his hands.

"A page from Vansitart's, about an hour ago," replied the clerk.

Cleve Stuart ran up to his room, lit his gas, dropped into a seat, and opened the letter.

His face flushed crimson, and then fgaded into pallor, as he read:

"No. — Fifth Avenue, April 30th, 8 P. M.

"Cleve, come to me instantly. Go no further in the matter we planned. There are no 'millions in it,' but ruin. Drop the girl like a grenade and escape destruction. She is a beggar. An heir has been discovered in the son of that

second son who was supposed to have died unmarried in California, who takes precedence of the daughter of the third, and who brings all the documents necessary to prove him the heir-at-law of the late John Haywood Hay, of Haymore. Come instantly to hear all the particulars. L. L."

CHAPTER V.

IN THE WILDS

"HERE's a go, No-Man's Mike! Here is a go!"

"And pwhat is it, thin, Ran Hay, me bowld bhoy?"

"I've come into a fortune!"

"Kim into a fortin? The divil ye have?"

"Blest if I haven't!"

"Glory be to Moses, thin! And is it a rich lade av the pure goold ye've sthruck, unbeknownst to meself, yer honest pard?"

"No! How could I? But it is something a great deal better than gold, that any man may happen to get for the digging."

"Hear that, now! Something a grade dale betther nor the beautiful goold! Tare an' 'ounds, man! pwhat kin be betther nor the shining yellow light of itself? And pwhat is it ye have kim into, thin?"

"Rank and position!"

"Rank and perdition! Whichst, ye hosses! Is it numerated for the Guv'ner av Californy, or President av the United States, ye are?"

"Neither just yet, Mike. I'm too young for such advancement. That is the only reason, Mike. I'm too young"

"Ah! to be sure! Thin it's the Quain av Ingland have made ye king av the speckled niggers in some av thim savidge countries jist conquested be the British Lyne! Ony bhoy as kin be spared 'ill do to fling at thim haythen cannybells."

"And you think I might be spared for such a fate? Thank you, No-Man's Mike. But it has not been offered me. You're out again."

"Thin, why the divil can't ye lave off bating about the bush, and tell me all av it?"

"Well, then, I have fallen heir to a great estate and a territorial title."

"The divil's granny! And where is it, now? In the moon?"

"In the North of England."

"In the Narth av Ingland! Look at that, now! And how kim ye to fall into sich luck galore?"

"By being next of kin and heir-at-law to the late Squire John Haywood Hay, of Haymore."

"Heh! Ye don't say so! I take off me hat to ye, shir. Or is it me lord, I should say? And here kims Gentleman Geff. Heh! Kim, Misther Delamere! And take yer hat off, shir, to a grader man than yerself! Bow to Misther Randolph Hay, Eskvire, of Haymore, being heir-at-law and next av kin to that grade estate."

"You've been drinking, Mike, and this is the first of April," said the newcomer, as he joined the first two men.

"Devil a dhrap av the craythe have gone down me windpipe the day! And av it's the first av April itself, yerself is the first to remimber it. Sure, it's no April joke I'm passing on ye."

"What does he mean, Hay?"

"I'll tell you later."

The scene was the mining camp of Grizzly, on Black Bear River, California.

The season was the evening of the first of April.

The persons were two young miners, who were also partners, returning to their cabins after a hard day's digging, and a certain "genteel" hanger-on to the camp and its one barroom and gambling den.

A mining camp is said to be a gathering of adventurers from all parts of the world and from every rank in society. It must, therefore, present strange contrasts, yet never stranger ones than were exhibited in the three men introduced to the reader under the names of Randolph Hay, No-Man's Mike and Gentleman Geff.

The first—"Ran Hay"—was a young man of about twenty-three years of age. He was of medium height and slender build, with a thin face, aqualine features, with a very dark complexion, jet black hair and beard. His glances, tones and movements were quick, alert, smooth and graceful as those of a cat or a serpent.

Yet let it not be thought that, with the peculiar charm and beauty of form and motion appertaining to these creatures, he possessed any of their sublety, treachery or cruelty. On the contrary, he was as frank, simple and honest a soul as ever lived.

His voice, too, was quick, *riant* and melodious. He looked a gentleman, notwithstanding that his skin was tanned by constant exposure, and his hands hardened by rough work; and he wore the coarse suit of the miner, consisting of a red flannel shirt tucked into the waistband of a pair of duck trousers, which were in turn tucked into the tops of high leather boots. In his hand he carried a very much battered old felt hat. Enough of him for the present. He will tell his own story later.

The second, No-Man's Mike, was a youth about nineteen years old, with a well-knit, sturdy form, above the middle height; with ruddy complexion, black hair, blue eyes, pug nose, wide mouth, fine teeth and a chin free from beard; and he had a merry, careless, mocking expression.

He, too, wore the miner's suit of flannel shirt, duck trousers and hide boots; but in his case they were all of one color, and that color was, "of the earth, earthy."

No-Man's Mike had received his odd nickname in this manner:

One evening, shortly after his arrival at Grizzly, it happened that one of the diggers, having been very lucky that day, treated the whole camp in Ben Brown's barroom. Mike got his full share of very bad whisky—much more than he had ever drank before. It got into his head, and it got into his tongue. He grew maudlin, affectionate and talkative about his "Swishter" Judy and himself. He always put Judy first, and, in camp parlance, he gave her and himself away. In short, he told the following story:

How, one fine May morning, about eighteen years ago, his twin Swishter Judy and himself had been left like a pair of young chickens at the door of the Foundling Hospital of the Sant Madre; how his swishter had been baptized Judith, in honor of the saint, and he had been baptized Michael, in honor of the great archangel, who, it was well beknownst, had whipped the divil at Donnybrook Fair, and had left him niver a leg to rin away wid.

How, at siven years old, his Swisther Judy and himself

had been parted—Judy sent to the female orphan asylum, and himself to the male—but they were permitted to visit aich ither at times, so that the warrum love betwixt them niver cooled.

How, at fourteen years of age, they were both 'printiced, —Judy to the mistress of a large family, to learn housework until she should be eighteen years of age, and Mike to a stonecutter, to learn his trade and work for his boss until he should be twinty-one, sure.

How, in his indentures, he was described as Michael Man, which he supposed the name of Man was given him only because he had been born a man-child, though no man, nor woman, nayther, had ever claimed him for a son. So he was no man's Mike, sartin sure.

How Judy washed and ironed, cooked and scrubbed, minded babies and cleaned house for his mistress until she was eighteen years old, and her time was out.

How Mike all the while worked hard with chisel and hammer for his boss, and fared hard, and the one drhame av his was to be free to work for Judy, and have her to kape house for himself, which drhame now, blissid be the holy mither, had come thrue.

How at length, when Judy was free to go where she plaised, though he had three years yit to serve wid his boss, he took thought that as he had nothing to do with making that bargain, he would have nothing to do with kaping it. So he had a talk with Judy, and they made up their bundles and ran away together to seek their fortunes in the gold mines; and how, after months of wandering, privation, suffering and vicissitude, they had drifted into Grizzly.

"And, gintlemin, sure it's yerselves that know the rist; and the throat av me is dhry as a limekiln wid all this talking, so it is," Mike had concluded.

They filled his can to the brim, and he emptied it to the bottom, and then rolled over and slept the sleep of intoxication. When the orgies broke up some of the sober men carried him to his cabin and laid him on his bed.

Yes, they knew the rest. They knew that on a certain stormy day in January, some fifteen months before, two forlorn young people were driven by stress of want and weather to seek shelter in the camp. At first they were

supposed to be a pair of young lovers who had run away to be married, but they were soon found to be orphan brother and sister, so destitute at this crisis of their lives that but for the kindness of the miners they must have perished. Here they found, at first, food and shelter given freely, and afterward work in plenty for both; and now they had met with good luck, if not great fortune.

The third man of the company—Gentleman Geff, otherwise Mr. Geoffrey Delamere—was the type of an ordinary English "swell."

No more was known of his parentage than was known of Mike's.

He seemed about twenty-five years of age, was tall, broad-shouldered, bull-necked and bullet-headed. He had regular features, a full face, fresh complexion, light red hair and beard, and steel blue eyes. He wore a neat morning suit of dark blue tweel, and—wonder of wonders in a mining camp—he wore spotless, snowy linen. But, then, Grizzly boasted a most accomplished laundress who was making lots of money by her art, and this was no other than Judy, Mike's good and pretty "swishter."

Gentleman Geff seemed to have led a very wild, reckless and perilous life by land and sea; he had been in the army and in the navy, in the civil service, but more than half his days and nights had been passed in barrooms and gambling saloons.

Nothing had ever succeeded with him but gambling, and that had succeeded so well as to defeat its own object, and ruin its votary. In other words, his face was too well known in the saloons of the great centers. So he had wandered out among the gold diggers, where his success followed him, until, as before, it defeated him. He had been expelled from some camps and had fled for his life from others, until, at length, he had drifted into Grizzly, where, luckily for him, his fame had not preceded him. Here he found lodgings with Ran Hay, who had space for a chum because his partner, Mike, lived with the latter's sister.

It was nearly dark when the three men reached their cabins. These were two of the rudest log huts that ever sheltered human beings. They stood side by side, with their backs against a rock crowned with stunted trees. They were exactly alike, each about twenty feet square, with no

better roof than a flat top built like the walls of rough logs filled in with earth. Each had a chimney at the back raised of rocks, against the rock, and each had a doorway without a door, and a window frame without a window, in front.

As you stood before them, the hut on the right was occupied by No-Man's Mike and his Swishter Judy; the one on the left, by Ran Hay and his guest, Gentleman Geff.

Ran Hay's hut was as dark as a pit, Mike's was all aglow with the light wood fire that the chilly April night made so desirable.

"That's all the differ, d'ye moind, betwaxt a woman and no woman to the fore. They may call me No-Man's Mike—had luck to the hands that flung me into the foundling, like a blind pup too many into the pond—but, bedad! no one can say I'm no woman's darlint. There's not the aiquil av that swishter av moine in all the country, aither aist or wast av the Rockies. And ef ony man denies it, he'll have to fight me," said Mike, looking defiant.

"And me, too, Mike!" warmly added Ran Hay.

"No man could be so ungallant, not to say untruthful, as to deny such an obvious fact," gravely observed Gentleman Geff.

"If he did he would have to swallow his words, rammed down his throat with the heft of my pick," said Ran Hay.

"Oh, ay; I hear till you, Misther Hay. But aven so, shir, ye may be afther tipping the colleen the cowld shouldther, now ye have kim into yer fortin. But if ye do——"

"Stow that, Mike! Nothing could ever make me go back on Judy," exclaimed the youth.

"Ah, bad luck till ye! Ye'll be afther looking up a leddy or a heiress. Sure, all the gintry do that same. But if ye do——"

"Shut up, No-Man's Mike! I'm not gentry myself, even if I come of gentry. But all the same, to judge by my father and my uncles, the Hays of Haymore, if they marry at all, marry for love, and nothing but love. There! Give my love to Judy, and tell her I'll look in after supper," said Ran Hay, as he turned to enter his hut.

"Howld on, man! Bide till I bring ye a lighted candle!" cried Mike, as he disappeared in his cabin. And "in less than no time" he reappeared with a lighted dip stuck in the mouth of an empty bottle.

"Now, shir, that'll light ye up till ye kindle your fire."

"Thank you, Mike," returned Ran, as he took the proffered candle and entered his hut, followed by Gentleman Geff.

The hut was as rude within as without, and provided in the most primitive manner. Two narrow bedsteads stood on opposite sides of the room, and were covered with buffalo hides and blankets; two stools, one pine table, a shelf, on which stood a few pieces of crockery and tin ware, and under which lay a few iron cooking utensils, completed the furniture.

Gentleman Geff threw himself down on one of the beds, and called Ran to bring him the candle to light his cigar.

And he lay and puffed away, filling the cabin with smoke, while Ran kindled the fire and prepared their supper.

When the coffee, fried bacon and eggs, corn cakes and molasses were placed upon the table, Gentleman Geff slowly raised himself from his recumbent position and drew a stool to the board and sat down, with no smile of appreciation for the young host, who was giving him freely of the best he had in food and shelter, time and service, but rather with a scowl of discontent and misanthropy at the hardness of his fare and the rudeness of his surroundings.

"Sorry I have got no better to offer a gentleman, Mr. Delamere; but it happens just now that there is not a pound of venison or bear's meat in the camp. If there was it should be at your service; but just now——"

"Ah, yes, it is always just now with me and my luck! But I am much indebted to you, Hay."

"Oh, stow that! Now, Judy keeps chickens and a pig. Bless you, she sent the very first money she earned by washing and ironing to 'Frisco by the packman to buy 'em alive for her, and they—the poultry, I mean—have increased and multiplied; but, Lord, Judy would no more let one of her chickens be killed than if it were one of her own young ones."

"I thought the girl was a single woman?"

"Oh, of course she is. I mean if she was married and had young ones. And I am only explaining why the fare is so hard. Why, Lord, before Judy came we never had fresh eggs. She is saving up money now to buy a cow.

And then we shall have fresh milk and fresh butter. That girl Judy has been a godsend to this camp."

"But you will scarcely be here to get the benefit of Judy's cow. You will be where all the luxuries of life will be at your command, if this story of your fortune is not a sort of April joke."

"It's no joke, though I can scarcely realize it myself as a fact yet. See here!" continued Ran Hay, and he pulled from his trousers' pocket a newspaper, and turning to the "personal" on the first column of the first page, he read:

"NEXT OF KIN.—If this should meet the eyes of James Jordan Hay, third son of the late John Haywood Hay, of Haywood, Yorkshire, England, he is requested to communicate immediately with the undersigned, when he will hear something to his advantage. Walling & Walling, Attorneys-at-Law, Judiciary Buildings, 111 Star Street."

"What paper is that, Hay?"

"The New York *Weekly Trumpeter*, which contains an epitome of the whole world history before it is lived out. Tells you every fact before it has happened, and all that."

"And you take it?"

"Yes; the packman brings it to me from 'Frisco every week. I got this last night; and, if you believe me, though I thought I had read every line in it, I hadn't seen this advertisement which concerns me so much. And as we were coming in this afternoon, I had just taken the paper out of my pocket, intending to hand it over to Ben Brown for the benefit of the crowd in his barroom, when my eyes accidentally 'met' a short paragraph in the 'Personal,' made up mostly of the surname Hay, which is also my name. So I read it and cried out. So would anybody who had suddenly come into a fortune."

"But, my friend, I don't see that this advertisement has anything to do with you, although the name is yours."

"Oh, yon don't—don't you? Then, I'll tell you. The late John Haywood Hay, of Haywood, Yorkshire, England, was my grandfather, and James Jordan Hay, third son of the deceased, but of nowhere in particular, is my youngest uncle!"

"Well?"

"Well, my father was the second son of the late squire, and the elder brother of James Jordan, and consequently preceded him in the heirship; and I, in the right of my father, am heir-at-law of Haymore."

"Whew-ew-ew!" said Gentleman Geff, blowing a slow whistle. "But, after all, my friend, it is your uncle, and not you, whom the advertisers call for."

"That's because they don't know anything about me. But, all the same, I am heir-at-law of Haymore!"

"Perhaps the deceased may have executed a will in favor of his youngest son?"

"Couldn't do it. The estate is strictly entailed."

"You seem to know a great deal about your grandfather's estate in Yorkshire, considering you never set foot in England."

"Yes, I do; though I never expected to be benefited by it. I guess I had better give you a little bit of family history, and that will tell you how and why I know so much. But let me clear up first," said Ran Hay, as he gathered the fragments of the meal and put them in a covered pail and set them outside of the door, with the remark: "Mike will take it away presently for Judy's pig."

Then he washed up the dishes and put them on the shelf, cleared off the table, lighted a second candle, and placed it with the first on the board, drew his stool up and sat down.

Gentleman Geff lighted a second cigar and puffed away at it as he sat opposite his host.

"You see," began Hay, "the late squire of Haymore, by all accounts, was a hard man, a stern father and a severe master. He was feared, respected and avoided by all who knew him. In his youth he had been guilty of what he considered a great folly, for which his father would have disinherited him, if he could have done so, but the fact of the estate being strictly entailed saved this prodigal son his inheritance."

"What did he do?"

"A deed just natural and honorable enough in itself, yet a deed of which he repented all the days of his life, and in memory of which he grew into a martinet in his own family discipline."

"But what did he do, I ask you again?"

"He married a beautiful gypsy girl with whom he had fallen madly in love!"

"Whew-ew-ew!" whistled Gentleman Geff. "But I don't blame him!"

"Don't blame him for what?" inquired Ran Hay, in doubt.

"For falling in love with the beautiful gypsy, and for repenting having married her all the days of his life! How did it turn out in other respects?"

"The marriage?"

"Of course!"

"Well, she brought him three sons, and then died, poor thing, when she was but twenty years old."

"Very properly! very considerately!" exclaimed Mr. Delamere.

"What do you mean?" queried Ran.

"It was the best thing she could have done for her husband," replied Genthleman Geff.

"It was the best thing she could have done for her herself, I think," remarked Ran Hay.

"Well, go on with the family history, with which you seem to be pretty well acquainted, considering all things."

"My father told me all I know. My grandfather brought up his three boys under a very severe rule. They were all very near of an age, with only a year between them. They grew up together, never went to a public school, but had a terrible tutor at home, a great scholar, but an ascetic fanatic, who made life hideous to them for many years, until they were all three duly prepared to enter college. The three were sent to Cambridge on the same day. Colin, the eldest son, was, of course, the heir; Cuthbert, the second son—my father—was intended for the church, because my grandfather had a living in his own gift; James, the third and youngest, was destined for the army. Now, I'm going to make very short work of these fellows, because I want to get off and go to see Judy," said Ran.

"Do so," agreed Gentleman Geff.

"Well, in due course of time they all came home from Cambridge for good. The heir became 'a mighty hunter before the Lord'—fox hunter, I mean. Mr. Cuthbert had read for holy orders, but he positively refused to take them. He had too much gypsy blood in him for that. Thereupon

ensued a terrible family row, which ended in the squire turning his second son out of doors. The young man sold all his personal effects—gold watch, diamond studs, books, pictures, fowling pieces, fishing rods and so on, and realized money enough to take him out to California. He came into the territory when there were more Spaniards than Americans here. I'm going to make short work of my poor father, because I promised to go and see Judy," said Ran, impatiently.

"Of course! Of course!" assented Gentleman Geff.

"My father, too, made a love match, but one of which he never repented. He married the daughter of a Spanish grandee, who was so poor and so proud that had the girl not found a husband of good family she must have gone into a convent."

"What was her name?"

"Maria della Rosa. And she was as beautiful as any other beauty for whom a man has lost the world. My father's poverty was no objection in the eyes of his intended father-in-law, especially when the former agreed to enter the Catholic Church in order to obtain his bride. They married and lived in the tumble-down old mansion of my grandfather, Don Luis della Rosa. My father obtained a position as teacher of English in a Spanish school, and though the confinement and the occupation were both extremely irksome and trying to his gypsy blood, he held it and supported the small family. Oh! how long it takes to tell all this, and I want to go to see——"

"Yes, I know; but hurry up."

"So I will. Well, I was born in my grandfather's house, and lived there until I was five years old, when a contagious fever broke out in the city, and carried off my old grandfather and my dear mother. My father went almost mad under this awful bereavement. Influenced by his grief, that would not allow him to remain in a scene where everything reminded him of all he had loved and lost, and influenced also, no doubt, by his gypsy blood that urged him to a wandering life, he left the city, taking me with him, and sought the gold mines, not for riches, but for change, distraction and forgetfulness. And from that time we lived the rough and rambling life of the miner, beguiled from place to place by reports of gold here and gold there. We

went wherever the crowd rushed, but we were never so fortunate as to get rich, though many of our fellow adventurers did. In all our wanderings my father found time to teach me the elementary branches of English education. He gave me also much information about our family. He had not heard directly from them for years, when, one day, an Englishman came into the camp, while we were in Buzzard Gulch, and in him my father recognized an agricultural laborer from the Haymore estate. The meeting was really a joyful one between the gentleman and the peasant. My father was so delighted to see some one from his own neighborhood who could give him news of his home; and the man, Stott, was so overjoyed to find out there in the wilderness, among total strangers, one whom he had known from his childhood up. From Stott my father learned that his father was still in fine health and spirits, that Mr. Colin was unmarried, but was the most famous hunter in the West Riding, and was the pride of his father's heart, but that the youngest son—Mr. James—had gone to ruin—yes, gone to ruin! He had married Amy Dell, the housemaid, and had been cast off by his father and compelled to sell out of the army by the coldness of his comrades, and that he had since left England for parts unknown."

"The Hays seem to have been rather addicted to low marriages," said Mr. Delamere.

"To love marriages, if you please. Yes, they have been, and they are still; for I mean to marry Judy, if she'll have me, please the Lord!"

"I think there will be little doubt about the lady's consent."

"I hope not any. Well, I think I have told you all I have to tell, except of that dark day when I lost my beloved father, and of that I cannot speak now. I know I would have given my life for his, had it been possible. At the time of my dear father's death there were two good lives between him and succession to the Haymore estates. My grandfather and his eldest son were both in vigorous health; but about a year after my dear father's decease news came, through a letter from Stott's father, who was gamekeeper at Haymore, that Mr. Colin had been thrown from his horse and instantly killed while hunting. Then I knew I was my grandfather's heir; though as he was then

but sixty years of age and might live to be ninety, I did neither wish nor expect to come into the property until I myself should be an old man."

"How long ago was this?"

"Why, only last March."

"So you see he did not long survive his favorite son."

"No; and now I am going to Judy."

"Stop! Have you all the documents necessary to prove your identity as heir-at-law of Haymore?"

"Every one of them. My father always took care of them, and cautioned me to do the same, in case they might be useful."

"When do you leave this place?"

"To-morrow. I sha'n't wait a week for the packman. I shall tramp to 'Frisco and take as near a bee line to New York as the railway routes will admit. Ha! ha! ha!"

"What's the matter?"

"I was just thinking——"

"What?"

"How much more like the heir of a great English estate you look than I do! My grandfather, as described to me, must have been your style—a tall, stout, fair man. My father and both my uncles, as described by him, were like the grandfather in person—tall, stout and fair. But as for myself, why, I seem to have got a double dose of darkness from my gypsy grandmother and my Mexican mother. It will take a deal of documentary evidence, supported by a deal more of personal and corroborative testimony, to establish the claim of such a little black fellow as I am to the inheritance of a great North of England estate! What do you think, Mr. Delamere?"

"With the papers in your possession, and with the witnesses you can bring from San Francisco, you will have no difficulty at all."

"Thank you. And now, indeed, I must go to Judy," said Randolph Hay, rising and leaving the hut.

Gentleman Geff lighted a fresh cigar and remained buried in profound reflection. The most horrible temptation of his wild and wicked life held him.

CHAPTER VI

JUDY

MIKE's hut was all aglow with firelight and candlelight when Ran stepped into the open doorway.

Mike sat in one corner of the chimney, smoking a pipe.

Judy sat in the other, knitting a yarn sock, and occasionally taking a completed one from her lap and measuring it with the one in progress, so as to make the pair alike, stitch for stitch.

She was not beautiful, but she had a good figure and a pleasing face—a feminine image of her twin brother—black hair, blue eyes, pug nose, large, but well-shaped mouth, fine teeth, a clear red-and-white skin, and a mocking smile.

On seeing Ran she got up and made him her best orphan asylum courtesy, and said:

"Me duty till ye, me lord—or is it Sir Ran? It's glory galore ye've kim into, sure, and it's very kind in yer lordship to take notices av the loikes av us."

"Now, Judy, stow that! Do you think that fortune can make any difference between us?" inquired Hay, in a grieved tone.

"Sure an' I know it niver will, Ran. I niver misgivid for a minit as ye would be the same thrue-hearted Ran, miner or me lord. Sure it's only fooling I was," replied Judy, coaxingly.

"Whatever fortune comes to me, Judy, you will share it, or else I shall not enjoy it."

"Sure an' I know that, Ran, as thrue as if the holy saints had towld me so. And now kim an' sit down an' tell me all about it," said the girl, drawing an empty deal box up before the fire, and turning it upside down to form a seat for her lover.

"But Mike has forestalled me in the story," complained Ran, as he sat down.

"Nivir a bit. He only towld me as ye were kim into a fortin by raison av being nixt av kin till a great English estate—that's all he knowed about it. Now tell me, avick," pleaded the girl, as she resumed her seat and recommenced her knitting.

Thus urged, Ran told the story of his inheritance and its discovery, as he had already told it to Gentleman Geff.

"Look at that, now!" observed Mike, at the conclusion of the tale. "It seems to rin in the blude av yees to marry poor girls."

"My father, however, married a lady descended on both sides of her family from the noblest of the oldest Castilian nobility," Ran explained.

"And ye'll be thinking av doing the same, mebbe——"

"Stow that, Mike!" exclaimed the young man, speaking sternly for the first time. "This is my wife," he added, with a sudden fall of his tone into tenderness, as he took the hand of Judy and held it fondly.

"Sure I know ye are thrue, Ran, and if they was to make you a king to-morrow ye would still be thrue; but, oh! Ran, ye will be a gintleman av quality, and I'm not fit to be a gintleman's wife, and sit at the head av the table in the grand dinner parties, and stand in the drawing room and receive the quality, and even make me riverence before the quain herself. Oh, no, Ran, I could niver do it," said Judy, with a laugh that ended in a sigh.

"But how do you know that anything of the kind would be required of you?" said Ran.

"Oh, sure, don't I raide the papers whiniver I kin git the chance? And don't they be telling av the grand doings av the grand people? And how Misthress Sich-an-one recaived in vilvit and dimints; and how President Sich-another did so and so! Ah! and I know more'n ye think I do; and it's an iliphint ye'll have on yer hands if ye marry me, me lord."

"Do you really think I'm a 'lord,' Judy?"

"I dunno. How do I know? I only know as you're a thrue-hearted lad; only I'm not fit for ye."

"Look here, Judy, dear, neither of us are qualified by education to fill the place in the world to which we may be called. I have but the elementary knowledge given me by my dear father while he lived. You have only the schooling of the orphan asylum; but we are both young enough, you being but nineteen and I but twenty-three, to give a few years yet of our lives to a proper training. Come, you and Mike and myself are to be one family and share the same fortune; there is to be no false pride between us three. I

have been thinking that I would like to enter some college and take a full college course of three or four years, as might be needful, and place you in some lady's school for the same time, and put dear Mike into anything at all that he would like—only stipulating that we should all live in the same town or city, so that we would meet very often, and we should also spend our vacation together. And at the end even of the longest term I have mentioned, four years hence, you would be but twenty-three and I but twenty-seven. Then we could be married, and enter upon our new sphere in a becoming manner. What do you think, Mike?"

"I think, Misther Hay, as ye are one av the most ginerous av gintlemin, and I thank ye. But aven so, I think ye'd betther be afther getting the fortin in hand afore spinding it," said No-Man's Mike, with a wink.

"That's as true as gospel, Mike, so to-morrow morning by the break of day I am off to 'Frisco, there to take as near a bee line as I can find to the East," said the young man, rising to take leave, for it was now late.

"Say sunrise, Ran, dear. Not daybreak. Start at sunrise for good luck," put in Judy.

"All right, my darling—sunrise let it be."

"And I'll have brekfist reddy for ye here, Ran. Ye'll not be afther stopping to git it yerself. It would be kaping ye that much—much longer away from me, Ran, when we have so little time together."

"Thank you, dear. Yes, thank you very much. I will come to breakfast. But Mr. Delamere?"

"Oh, he'll be aslape, the lazy bones av him. Sure yerself towld me he's nivir up till late. And aven so, I'll give him something to eat afther ye'r gone. *Och hone* that iver ye should have to lave me aven for a fortin, Ran!" exclaimed Judy, half laughing, half crying.

"Only for a little while. As soon as the necessary forms shall be completed to put me in possession of my property, back I rush as fast as steam can bring me to you, my Judy. Now, good-night."

When Ran re-entered his own hut he found Gentleman Geff still sitting at the table, smoking and meditating.

The two tallow candles had burned quite low. Ran

lighted two fresh ones and substituted them for the ends, and then he asked his guest:

"How have you passed the evening all alone by yourself?"

"In philosophical meditations," responded the guest.

"I thought perhaps that you would drop into Ben's saloon for a game of euchre."

"No."

"I shall have to turn in shortly, because I must be up by daybreak in the morning."

"Do you leave so early?"

"At sunrise—for good luck, Judy says."

"Ah!"

"Now, Mr. Delamere, it is not much to leave, but, such as it is, the cabin is at your disposal for a dwelling. I know you, a gentleman born and brought up, cannot work for yourself, nor is it to be expected that you should, but Mike and Judy have promised that they will do for you, as long as you shall stay, or until my return here."

"You are very kind. So are they. I thank you all," said the philosopher, taking his cigar from his mouth while he spoke and then replacing it.

Meanwhile Ran Hay busied himself about the room, packing a bag, and making other preparations for his early start in the morning.

Suddenly Gentleman Geff threw away the stump of his cigar, and said:

"I have been thinking, Hay, that I shall not care to stay here after you have left the place."

Ran stopped packing and stood up to listen.

"I have half a mind to bear you company as far as San Francisco."

"Oh! have you!" exclaimed Ran. "That will be jolly. But—you can never tramp to 'Frisco! It's a hundred miles!"

"Why not? I made the pedestrian tour of Europe five years ago, and I have not lost strength since then."

"Oh! that indeed. But are you in earnest?"

"Never was more serious in my life. I will go with you as far as 'Frisco, if you will accept my company."

"My dear Delamere, I shall be delighted," replied Ran Hay, in all sincerity.

Then they talked over the plan of their pedestrian journey—the hour for starting, which should be at sunrise the next morning; the number of miles they should get over on each day, which was guessed to be between twenty and twenty-five, according to the nature of the ground and other circumstances; the time it would take them to reach the city, which was estimated at five days at furthest; next and last, the arms and provisions necessary to take with them.

"I know the country well," said Ran Hay. "If it keeps dry we can sleep outdoors every night. If it should rain we should be almost sure to find a hunter's or a miner's cabin, or a friendly Indian's wigwam, where we could find shelter for a night; or, at worst, I have an India rubber blanket that is capable of keeping us both dry. Then as to the commissary department. We must take hard-tack, salt pork, coffee and sugar, and a box of matches to light a fire when we want to cook. I shall take no clothing but what I wear on my person, because I intend to get a proper outfit at 'Frisco, where I have some money in the Miners' Savings Bank. For defense I shall take a couple of knives and a pair of revolvers. Have you arms? If not I can divide with you."

"I have a pair of pistols and a Damascus dagger," replied Gentleman Geff.

"That is all right. Now we had better turn in as soon as possible, if we want to be in condition to begin our walk to-morrow," said Ran Hay, as he threw himself on his bed, all dressed as he was in shirt and trousers, and where he soon fell asleep.

Gentleman Geff remained up much longer, busying himself with preparations for his journey. Among other matters, he carefully examined his pistols, drew the charges, cleaned the weapons and reloaded them. At last he, too, went to bed, but not to sleep. The dark temptation still held him in its grip.

With the earliest dawn of day Randolph Hay was up and about his last business at the gulch.

Gentleman Geff, hearing him stirring, also sat up on his bunk and stretched his arms with a great yawn.

"Hope you slept well! I did!" said Hay, who had lighted two candles to see by.

"Yes!" shortly responded the other.

"We will get our breakfast in Mike's cabin this morning. Judy makes a point of it. And it will be a better breakfast than I could give you," continued Ran.

And while he spoke, the candlelight and firelight streaming out from the window and doorway of the next hut showed that active preparations for breakfast were going on there.

Very soon after this the good-natured face of No-Man's Mike appeared at the window.

"The top o' the morning till ye both, gintlemin. And, Misther Hay, sure the male's riddy to be sarved when ye'self is."

"Thank you, Mike. Mr. Delamere will take his breakfast with us this morning, also, if you please," said Ran Hay.

"Sure, and I do plaise. And it's heartily welcome he is to the bit and sup," cordially replied Mike.

"Mr. Delamere is going to walk with me as far as 'Frisco," said Ran.

"The divil he is! And it's right glad I am as ye'll have such good company, Ran, me bhoy. And that's not saying as I'll be glad to part wid Misther Delamere at the same toime. But he'll be afther kimming back till us. He'll not be going Aist?"

"Oh, no! He is going no further than 'Frisco," replied Ran, as the three men left Hay's cabin to enter Mike's.

Judy greeted the newcomers with smiles through her tears. She was glad to hear that Gentleman Geff was going along with Ran. It would be so much safer and pleasanter for Ran, she thought.

Judy had prepared an excellent breakfast for the departing men. There was as strong and as good coffee as could be found anywhere "aiste or wast av the Rockies," to use Mike's own favorite expression; and though there was no milk or cream, a rich substitute was found in fresh eggs beaten to a froth; and there was broiled ham and poached eggs, and rice cakes and light rolls.

All made a hearty breakfast, for all were young and healthy, and, with one exception, true and honest.

When the meal was over the travelers bade good-by to their hosts and took up their packs. Gentleman Geff walked out with Mike.

"That's roight. Lave the craychurs to say good-by to

aich other alone," said Mike, for Ran had lingered behind for a few last words with Judy.

"I leave the hut and all it contains to you, Judy, until I come back, and then neither of us will need it," said Ran.

"Sure, thin, in the manetoime I will take boarders in it, and make money out av it," said Judy, trying to joke and laugh through her tears.

"You will not need money. Remember the fortune coming to you, Judy."

"Ay, sure, the fortune! And the first thing the fortune has done for me is to take ye away!" She was on the brink of bursting into tears, but she governed her feelings.

"Only for a little while, darling of darlings, and then I'll be back."

"How long? Oh, tell me how long?"

"In four weeks, or five or six at the very furthest. And I will write every week. Now good-by, sweetest heart. God bless you!"

He folded her to his bosom, kissed her again and again, then broke away and joined his comrade on the outside of the hut.

Then he hastily shook hands again with Mike, and then, side by side, the travelers left the camp just as the sun was rising.

They entered the timber west of the camp, and in its dense shadows were soon lost to sight, even had there been any one astir at that early hour but Mike and his "Swishter" to watch them on their way.

All day long their way lay through the forest by a trail made for the pack horses between the Grizzly and other camps.

At noon they halted near a spring to rest and dine.

Ran Hay was in the highest spirits, laughing, talking, telling stories and singing songs. Gentleman Geff was silent and moody.

"I wonder what is the matter with him?" thought Ran. "If he was one of the boys, I might ask him and offer to help him if he wants help; but these swell gents are so touch and go that one doesn't know how to deal with them."

After a long rest they resumed their walk.

The afternoon was fine, with a promise of continued clear weather. They walked on, Ran singing, talking, laughing,

trying to rouse his companion from his gloom without appearing to do so.

The sun declined toward his setting. The companions walked slowly.

Twilight gathered and fell sooner and darker in the woods than elsewhere.

"I think we shall have to sleep in the timber to-night. But it will be cool and dry," said Ran.

"Yes," curtly replied his companion.

"And we shall have to stop at the first available spot, for there is a sudden fall of the ground hereabouts, somewhere before us, and it is growing so dark that we cannot see the way. I—I don't think we can go much further."

"No," shortly replied Gentleman Geff.

"We had better walk single file here, Mr. Delamere. The path is getting tangled as well as narrow."

"Very well, do you go on before. You know the way better than I do."

"All right," replied Ran, as he took the lead.

The path was difficult, from the ruggedness of the ground, the interlacing of the timbers, and from the darkness of the sky—for though countless millions of stars were shining in the heavens above, and could be seen here and there through the interstices of the upper branches of the trees, they shed no light upon the forest path.

Ran walked slowly on ahead, carefully opening the way through the thicket.

Gentleman Geff walked closely behind, keeping his eyes on the figure ahead, which seemed only a form of denser darkness in the dark around, and keeping his right hand on his breast pocket.

"We shall soon come to an opening now, where we can build our camp fire and go to rest," said Ran, encouragingly.

"Yes," replied Delamere, and he handled something in his left breast pocket, but did not withdraw it.

Ran's mood had changed since the setting of the sun. He was no longer "gay and happy"; he seemed thoughtful. He still sang, but no longer "Oh, Susannah," or "Shoo Fly," or anything like them. He sang one of Thomas Moore's sacred songs, often repeating the refrain and dwelling tenderly upon it.

Perhaps it was the dark woodland scene and the starlit sky that first suggested that particular song and wooed him to linger fondly over the refrain:

"'As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day,
As darkness shows us worlds of light——'"

A sharp shot rang out upon the silent night, and Ran Hay fell forward on his face, the song of praise stilled on his lips.

Gentleman Geff replaced his pistol in his pocket, stepped forward and stooped over the prostrate form. He turned it over, examined it carefully.

"Dead!" he muttered. "Poor devil, his death was a hard necessity; but I am glad he died easy.

"'Sharp be the blade and swift the blow,
And short the pang to undergo!'

in every case of this sort. Talk of free agency! What free agency had I in this? I was obliged to do it. Self-preservation is the first law of nature. Poor little devil, though, for all that! Bah!"

With these words Mr. Delamere took up the leather bag that had fallen to the ground, put it safely on one side and then proceeded to rifle the pockets of his victim.

When this was accomplished, and he had taken possession of everything of value on the person of poor Ran, he began to push and roll the body further into the scrub on the right side of the path; it was so dark that he could not see what was before him, when suddenly, with his last push, the body fell down a declivity with a heavy thud as it struck the ground.

"The devil!" exclaimed Delamere. "In another instant I should have been over myself and have broken my neck! Poor wretch! Before day the wolves will have destroyed his body or made it unrecognizable. No camping out for me to-night. I must tramp on."

CHAPTER VII

A TERRIBLE TRIAL

"THANK GOD!" earnestly ejaculated Cleve Stuart, "with the sigh of a great deliverance," as he finished the letter of Lamia Leegh, and laid it down and covered his face with his hands.

This fervent ejaculation of thanksgiving for a lost fortune will scarcely need explanation to those who have watched the struggle between good and evil in the tempted young man's mind. They will understand that the thanksgiving was for honor saved.

In consenting to marry the young girl for the sake of her fortune, he had yielded to the sophistries and solicitations of the beautiful and unscrupulous woman with whom he was blindly, passionately infatuated—just such a woman as has often, in the world's history, led honorable men to infamy and destruction.

But as soon as he was out of her baleful influence, and in the pure atmosphere of an innocent maiden, then his better nature awoke. His conscience and his sense of honor arose and led him to condemn and despise himself for the course he had taken. And then another motive acted upon him—pity and tenderness for the fading girl to whom he had offered himself, and who had accepted him with so much joy and gratitude.

Often after his sudden betrothal to Palma Hay he thought of breaking the unworthy bond, but was held fast by the girl's delight in his presence and devotion to himself. He knew that she had given him her whole love, yes, even from her childhood, and now, after years of waiting and longing, she was radiantly happy in the faith that he had given her his whole love as truly. He could not find it in his soul to undeceive her; he could not break her heart. He must marry her and make her happy for the few brief days of life that might remain for her. And he tried to deceive himself with the thought that there was no other way out of his dilemma, and that he was justified in his action. Yet still the voice of conscience whispered uneasily that his position was not one of honor.

The betrothed of a dying girl for the sake of her fortune!

Now, however, a way was opened out of this false and dishonorable situation.

"Another heir turned up!" he muttered to himself. "I am glad of it!—glad of it!—and glad and grateful that he has appeared in time to save me from a mercenary marriage—from the deep dishonor of marrying a dying girl for her money—a dishonor into which I have been blindly lured like a dupe under a spell, but from which I am now—thanks be to God!—happily delivered! I shall marry Palma Hay, all the same, poor child!—poor, tender, loving little heart!—but not for money, since she will have none. I shall marry her because I have promised to do so, and I shall devote myself to her, and divide my small means with her as long as she may live; but, thank God! I shall not get one penny with her. And that reminds me that next week I must look out for employment. My few hundred dollars will not last long with a sick wife on hand."

The clock began to strike, and aroused him from his reverie.

"Nine! I must go to Lamia, since she wants me, and have a final explanation with her," he said; and he arose and hastily threw off his traveling suit and dressed himself for the evening, hurried downstairs and halted a passing cab, which he entered, and, at twenty minutes past nine, he found himself at the door of the Vansitart mansion.

A liveried servant admitted him, and showed him into the drawing-room.

There he found Miss Leegh, in company with Mrs. Vansitart.

Cleve Stuart made his bow to the ladies, and took a seat.

There was no opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* with the young lady; yet Lamia soon took up the subject which was uppermost in both their minds, and managed to convey much information to Cleve without taking the third party into their confidence.

"You know Mr. Samuel Walling, of Walling & Walling?" she said, interrogatively.

"The junior partner? Yes; I have met him," he replied.

"He is coming here to-night, by appointment, to introduce his client and protégé, a Mr. Randolph Hay. Will you please tell Mr. Stuart about it, dear Mrs. Vansitart?

You know so much more of the circumstances than I do," said Lamia, appealing to her patroness.

"Well, it is rather a strange matter," said the elder lady, in explanation. "You must know, sir, that for the last few weeks, Walling & Walling, under advice of their correspondents, Sothoron & Drummond, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, have been advertising for one James Jordan Hay, third son, and supposed to be heir-at-law, of the late John Haywood Hay, of Haymore, Yorkshire."

"I have seen such an advertisement," said the young man.

Lamia Leegh gave him a warning glance, as if to say:

"Be careful how much you admit."

"Well," continued the elder lady, "no answers ever came to that advertisement, and the attorneys were about to withdraw it and give up the pursuit, I believe, when into their office, the other day, walked a young gentleman, who introduced himself as Randolph Hay, of San Francisco, only son and heir of the late Cuthbert Hay, and grandson and heir-at-law of the late John Haywood Hay, of Haymore, Yorkshire, England."

"This must have been a great surprise to the Messrs. Walling," said Cleve Stuart, seeing that the lady had paused and looked at him, as if expecting some comment.

"It was. For this was not what they had advertised for. Cuthbert Hay was known to have been killed in the mining districts of California, and was supposed to have died unmarried."

"Did this claimant bring proofs of his identity as the legal son and heir of Cuthbert Hay?"

"Abundant proof: the certificate of the marriage of his father and mother, and of his own birth and baptism, and of the death of his father and of his mother, besides letters and photographs of his family; and he is ready to produce, in person, if required, the Catholic priest who married his parents, baptized himself and buried his mother."

"I suppose, then, it is all right."

"Of course it is. The Messrs. Walling have no doubt. They have already cabled the facts to their correspondents in London, and to the solicitor of the late squire. They have taken up the young gentleman, and they are introducing him everywhere. Sam Walling asked permission to

bring him here to-night, and—— Here they come!" broke off and exclaimed the lady, as the doorbell rang.

The next moment the footman announced:

"Mr. Samuel Walling. Mr. Randolph Hay."

And a stout, bald-headed and spectacled lawyer entered the drawing-room, closely followed by the gentleman we have hitherto known as Mr. Geoffrey Delamere, otherwise Gentleman Geff. Both were in faultless evening dress—black swallow-tail coats and black trousers, white kid gloves and patent leather boots.

Mrs. Vansitart arose to receive the visitors.

Mr. Walling presented in due form:

"Mr. Randolph Hay, late of San Francisco, now of Haymore Manor, England."

Mrs. Vansitart bowed, and said that she was——

"Happy to make the acquaintance of Mr. Randolph Hay."

She presented him in turn to her friend, Miss Leegh, and to Mr. Cleve Stuart.

Then all seated themselves, and entered upon the small talk of society. In this Gentleman Geff was an adept; the weather, the opera, the last new actress, the last new novel, were all discussed; nor was the favorite lecturer or the fashionable preacher left uncriticised or unpraised. The call lasted some twenty minutes, and then the lawyer and his client took leave.

Cleve Stuart stayed on. He was known, or believed to be, engaged to Miss Leegh, and therefore he was a privileged visitor, free from the law of limitation supposed to govern fashionable calls.

After the departure of the visitors the talk of the drawing-room circle turned upon the stranger.

"A most elegant and accomplished gentleman, a patrician of the purest strain," Mrs. Vansitart declared. "What do you think, Mr. Stuart?"

"If you will excuse me, I would rather not express an opinion, Mrs. Vansitart," replied the young man.

"Ah, now you pique my curiosity, and I must insist on your giving us your opinion."

"Then, madam, this 'gentleman' impresses me as belonging not to the aristocracy or to the gentry, but to the swell mob," said Cleve.

"Oh! that is too rude and harsh."

"You insisted on having it, madam."

"But I have noticed that handsome young men are always apt to be jealous of each other," continued the lady, as if she had not heard the last remark of her interlocutor.

And then she good-naturedly made some trivial excuse to go away and leave the supposed lovers together.

"And now!" said Lamia, leaving her ottoman, and crossing the room to seat herself beside Cleve on the broad sofa.

"Yes, now!" responded the man.

"Oh, what a narrow escape you have had, Cleve!"

"A very narrow escape, indeed!"

"I gasp when I think of it! Why, you might have been married now!"

"I thank Heaven that I am still free!"

"Oh! so do I! If it had not been for that little fanatic's objection to be married on Good Friday, you would have been bound."

"But, Lamia," inquired Cleve, with some feeling of curiosity, "how did you know that the child objected to being married on Good Friday?"

"Oh, my dear Cleve, the district visitor, of whom I told you before, was here this morning with a wonderful story. Mrs. Vansitart was out, and I alone saw her. She told me of the fairy prince who had come to marry Cinderella, who refused to wed before Easter, but who was carried off to Arcadian groves to spend the interval before the wedding."

"Ah! But, Lamia, is it not strange that, between the calls of the district visitor and the calls of the Messrs. Walling at this house, the existence of the daughter of James Jordan Hay has not become known to the attorney?"

"Why, no; because, you see, Miss Griffiths, the visitor in question, knows nothing of the girl's previous history, nor has she even got her name correctly, but writes it Palmer Hayes. Even I should not have recognized her identity but for the story you told me on the deck of the steamer."

"I see!"

"Well, you have had a narrow escape, as I said before. But where is the poor little wretch?"

"She is at the Pine Mountain House, on the west bank of the Hudson, in charge of a woman who has been kind to her."

"Yes, I know—a Mrs. Pole, who told an old wooden peg-maker all about the visit of the fairy prince. After which the peg-maker told the district visitor, from whom I got the information. But now, Cleve, when does the deluded little fool believe that you are going to marry her?"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Really? Poor creature! what a blow the disappointment will be to her!" said Lamia, with a laugh.

Cleve Stuart had been trying to nerve himself to tell Lamia Leegh that, despite the changed fortunes—and, indeed, with all the more satisfaction on account of the changed fortunes—he should keep faith with Palma, and marry her at the appointed time. Also, he had been partially recovering his senses, that had been so long dazzled and distracted by the charms of Lamia Leegh, especially as she, since she had drawn him into that conspiracy, and had begun to believe him as unscrupulous as herself, had thrown off her disguise, and shown herself as she was. But that last heartless laugh at the anticipated humiliation of poor little Palma decided him, and he answered, coldly:

"She will not have a disappointment."

"Why—what do you mean by that?" inquired Lamia, uneasily.

"I shall keep my promise to her. God willing, I shall marry her to-morrow afternoon."

"Cleve Stuart!"

"I have no other alternative," he said, turning his eyes away that he might not see the severity of her handsome face.

"You have no alternative!" she repeated, in a tone full of scorn and anger.

"No, none," he answered, still without looking at her.

"Cleve Stuart! Are you an idiot?"

"I have been a fool, but I will not be a villain. I must keep my plighted troth to that poor child."

"Cleve Stuart, you rave! You talk rubbish! Your 'plighted troth,' indeed! Your plighted troth was mine—mine! And it was only by my permission that you ever proposed marriage to that dying pauper—a permission which I now withdraw. Do you understand? I forbid you to marry her!" said Lamia Leegh, losing all control over her temper, and speaking both angrily and arrogantly; for

that her slave, who had ever hitherto been most submissive to her will and most obedient to her words, should now revolt against her authority in any case, and most especially in such a personal and delicate case as this, was amazing, incomprehensible and maddening to the vain, proud, self-willed beauty, who loved herself much more than she loved him or any other living creature.

"Why do you not answer me, sir?" she haughtily inquired, seeing that he continued silent, with downcast eyes.

"Lamia," he began, gravely, and sorrowfully, turning away his head, that he might not see her face; for his soul was deeply troubled by this insight he had obtained of her spirit—"Lamia, you are right in some respects. My troth was pledged to you—was, not is. You released me for a purpose suggested by yourself. It was at your earnest solicitation, and through your sophistical arguments, that I debased my will and conscience to seek out this dying girl and marry her for her money, that, after her death, you and I might marry and share the fortune between us——"

He stopped suddenly, and struck the arm of the sofa with an expression of intense self-disgust and abhorrence, and then facing around upon her, he said:

"I was a scoundrel to offer myself to a dying girl from any such motive, but now that she has accepted me, I should be a much baser scoundrel to desert her. To do so now that I know she is poor and must be poor for her life, would be to sink to a depth of infamy of which even I am not capable—although," he added, with a laugh that in a woman would have been called hysterical—"although I have lately shown what Falstaff would term 'an alacrity in sinking' in that way."

"Cleve Stuart! stop talking such extravagance and listen to me!" exclaimed Lamia, whose alarm was beginning to conquer her anger.

"No!" he answered, firmly. "On this subject I must not listen to you! To do as you would have me—to break with Palma Hay now, would be to commit a safe murder. You know, from what you have heard and inferred, that the child has loved me from her infancy. That knowledge was the basis of your advice to me, to seek her out, to marry her on her deathbed, that you and I might afterward enjoy her fortune."

"Why do you bring up this?" demanded Lamia, angrily, stamping her foot.

"To remind you that she loves and trusts—her betrothed husband—unworthy as he is! To desert her now, in her weak state, would be to hurry her into her grave, to commit a safe murder, a crime baser than any for which convicted felons swing on the gallows or serve in the penitentiaries. Miss Leegh!" he added, speaking earnestly and deliberately, "I would sooner fire a church, rob a bank, murder a traveler, commit any crime for which I should risk my life or liberty, in an equal duel with law and justice—than perpetrate this cowardly baseness with perfect impunity against this innocent and defenseless child!"

"Have you done?" demanded Lamia Leegh, through her set teeth and white lips.

"Not quite! I wish to say that you must not think that I do not suffer through all this. Heaven only knows how much I suffer! Yet I accept the suffering as a just punishment for my fault; and I am glad, glad that by this marriage I shall receive no benefit; but rather take up a burden, which I mean to bear cheerfully."

"Oh, no doubt of it!" sneered Lamia Leegh. "I dare say the girl may be quite pretty, in your eyes, and not near so ill as she is represented to be, and she may come in for a fine slice of the Haymore estate, after all."

Cleve Stuart let the sarcasm and insinuation pass unnoticed.

"Have you anything more to say to me?" she inquired, with hard lips.

"I think not."

"Then you will kindly relieve me of your presence?"

"Certainly. I came at your call. I go at your command," said the young man, rising.

"And please to understand, Mr. Stuart, that this is a final farewell."

"Yes, I understand that; and I know that it is best it should be so," he answered, in a low tone, that he vainly endeavored to steady.

"Good-by, Lamia," he said, offering his hand.

"Miss Leegh, henceforth, if you please, when you have occasion to speak of me—you will never, after this evening,

have the embarrassment of speaking to me," she said, in angry scorn.

"It is better that I should not. Good-evening, Miss Leegh," he said, with a ceremonious bow.

"Good-evening, Mr. Stuart," she responded, with another bow.

And they parted.

Lamia Leegh stood where he had left her, white and rigid with rage.

"I will make him repent this—repent it bitterly to the last day of his life! May I go to perdition if I do not!" she hissed between her clenched teeth.

Meanwhile Cleve Stuart left the house. He did not call a cab or even enter a car or stage, but walked on down Fifth Avenue to its juncture with Broadway, and then down the latter thoroughfare toward his hotel—trying by exercise to walk off his mental excitement.

His life seemed broken off in its youth, now, more completely by tribulation than it could be by death. The parting from Lamia was very, very bitter. It was such an infinite and everlasting parting—worse, more effectual and final than by distance or by dissolution; for it was not only a material and temporal separation, but a spiritual and an eternal separation. There was no affinity, but antagonism, between their souls.

"How could a woman's beauty, grace and softness blind me to her moral deformity?" he asked himself.

"Why cannot my later knowledge of her moral ugliness break the spell her beauty cast, without giving me so much pain? I never could unite myself for life to one like her, so why should my life seem so shattered by this parting and estrangement? Ah! well, I have deserved my punishment, having brought it all upon myself. Nothing remains for me but to bear my pain and to do my duty. May Heaven help me to be firm and faithful."

With this prayer on his lips, he entered his hotel, went to his room and retired to bed, where presently sleep came even to his troubled soul.

CHAPTER VIII

A WAITING BRIDE

About the same time that Cleve Stuart and Lamia Leegh sat together in the parlor of the Vansitart mansion, going through their final explanation—Palma Hay, the poor little bride-elect, reclined on her resting chair, at the front window of her room where her betrothed had left her, three hours before.

Near her sat Mrs. Pole in another easy-chair.

The kerosene light on the center table had been turned very low and seemed now only a spark in the darkness of the room; while seen through the front windows, the starlit night was beautiful above the wooded hills, and fragrant with the odor of the pines and cedars.

"Child," said Mrs. Pole, after a long silence, "it is late, it is time for you to go to bed. You have not sat up so long for two months past."

"I know it, Poley. Not since the beginning of my illness; but, then, I have never felt so well—physically I mean—as I do to-night. It is so delicious here. One must feel well—in body at least," replied the girl, with a scarcely perceptible reservation.

"Then, my dear, you should try to keep up that good state by taking care of yourself, and going right to bed, and to sleep."

"Oh, Poley, I cannot, dear. I would rather sit here by the window and watch the stars, shining over the wooded hills. If I were to go to bed, I could not sleep. Oh, Poley, Poley, I can keep it to myself no longer. I must tell you!" she sighed, and paused.

"Why, what in the world is it, my child? What on earth should you have to tell me?"

"Oh, dear old friend, I do not know why it should be, but there is such a heavy weight on my heart, such a dark shadow over my mind, as some impending calamity!"

"A weight on your mind? What a notion! It is only your nerves, child. You have gone through a good deal

yesterday and to-day, and your nerves have given way, and that is a sign you should go to bed."

"Oh, I cannot, Poley, dear. You don't know how I feel. Such gloom and heaviness."

"But what is it about, child? Anything in partic'lar, now?"

"No, it is nothing that I can—make out. It is vague, nebulous, horrible!"

"Now I bet anything in this world as it is nothing at all but them there spring chickens we had br'iled for supper!" exclaimed Mrs. Pole.

Palma gazed at her in perplexity.

"Now," continued the woman, "there ain't nothing on earth as sounds more dainty, and delikit, and dergesterble than fresh, young, spring chickens well br'iled. Why, you might give 'em to an infant baby. But, then, if they are too fresh, and br'iled and eat too soon after they're killed, there ain't nothing in this world as sets heavier on the stummuck than they do. I know that from my own essperience!"

"But—are you not well, Mrs. Pole?"

"Lord love yer, chile, I was speaking of past essperience, not present. And, honey, whenever anything sets heavy on the stummuck the stummuck presses the heart, so an overloaded stummuck may be mistook for a heavy heart, or even a broken one, either. Yes, chile, a lady as I washed for oncet told me that, when she 'splained that it was dispepsy as was killin' me, and not grief for poor, departed Jim Pole, gone to glory long ago and how I must stop eating cold pork and cabbage after a hard day's work before going to bed. And, chile, she ought to knowed what she was talking about, for she was own aunt to a mediky student as boarded long of her, and as I washed for. Depend upon it, chile, it's your undergested supper as is weighing on your sperrits!"

"Oh! no, Poley, dear, it is not that. The meal was good and wholesome, and agreed with me so well that I am almost hungry again."

"Well, then, chile, if that is so, you had better take your iced milk punch and sago biscuits and go to bed."

"Don't ask me to do it, Poley, dear. I cannot! I feel as if some heavy misfortune were hanging over me—some-

thing—coming—through Cleve," she said, slowly and thoughtfully, as if she were trying to define the indefinable dread that darkened her soul. "And, oh! you know, Poley, dear," she added, "that anything which should hurt him would almost kill me."

"Yes, chile, I know. But what should hurt that fine, strong young gentleman? He can take care of himself, and he will. You may depend on that."

"I don't know. There are such events as railway collisions, you know, and other accidents, also, in which strength is of little avail; and some one has said or written that 'it is the unexpected which always happens.'"

"And that is just as true as if it had never been said or written. So make your mind easy. You are all right there. You are fearing some trouble, and therefore it won't fall on you. And you are not expecting that everything will go well. Therefore Mr. Stuart will arrive here to-morrow safe and sound. You'll see! Why, chile, these here forebodin's are common enough among young people who are looking forward to something and 'fraid of being disappointed. Why, I reckon there never was a young girl getting ready for her first ball—let alone to be married—as wasn't feard it would rain, or somebody would die, or something would happen to disappoint her!"

"Is that really so, Poley?"

"Really and truly. But nothing ever does happen as is foreboded."

"Is that so, too, Poley?"

"Positively and truly. So you go on thinking as there will be a collision of the steam cars, or something else, and then Mr. Stuart will arrive all safe and well to-morrow. But, lovey, when he do arrive, you would like him to find you looking well and pretty, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Poley."

"Well, then, you must take your sago biscuits and iced milk punch and go to bed. Lying down will do you good, even if you do not sleep."

"Very well, Poley, I will, but, oh——

" 'Heavy, heavy hangs over my poor head!' "

said the girl, between a smile and a sigh, as she quoted the line from a nursery play.

" 'Hush, Miss Palma! Don't you cry!
Your sweetheart will come by'n by!
When he comes he'll come in blue,
To let you know his love is true;
Or if he don't, he'll come in gray,
To say he'll marry you to-day,' "

sang Mrs. Pole, in a very sweet soprano voice. "You see, lovey, I can quote po'try as well as you! Now no more nonsense, honey, or else I'll give you a dose of chloral as will quiet you down to-night, but make you look as white as a ghost to-morrow morning. It always does, devil fetch it for a deceiving drug. Now, will you be good or not?"

"I will be good and obedient, Poley! One ought to be on sacred, holy Easter Eve, you know."

"Surely," responded Mrs. Pole, and she went and turned up the light, then closed the shutters.

"Shutting out the beautiful starlit sky and pine-crowned hills," said Palma.

"Well, darling, you can't sit star-gazing at the window all night, if you don't want to look like a stewed witch in the morning."

"I know, Poley. But it seems such a pity to shut out the beautiful scene! I could sit and look at it all night, if I were not such a poor, weak creature!"

Mrs. Pole brought a jug of milk punch from the pail of ice water in which it had been kept, and then a box of sago biscuits, and placed them on the table.

Then she drew the easy-chair, with Palma in it, up to the board.

"Poley, here is but one plate and one glass; where are the others?" inquired the girl.

"My dear, the punch and the biscuits are for you, and you will not require more than one plate and one glass."

"Poley! You are a horrible old humbug! And I won't touch bite or sup unless you join me, and 'drink fair,' too, 'drink fair, whatever you do,' as Sairy Gamp says."

"Who's Sairy Gamp, my child?"

"Oh, an old friend of mine."

"Well, I don't think much of her, honey, if she's fond of drink. Besides, there's nothing here for me to drink out of," added Mrs. Pole, inconsequently.

"Yes, here's a goblet, Poley, that you may use."

"And what'll you do?"

"Bring me that tumbler from the washstand. You may rinse it out as often as you please, and then I can drink my milk punch out of it. I like a tumbler. It is so old-fashioned and nice."

This was Palma's not insincere device to give the best service to her old friend.

Mrs. Pole washed and wiped and rinsed the tooth-brush tumbler full half a dozen times before she brought it to Palma. "For nobody knows how many people have put their brushes into it," she said.

There was much more of the milk punch than little Palma needed or could have drunk, and Mrs. Pole knew that, so with a clear conscience she joined her charge.

When the little refreshment was over, and the table cleared, Palma said:

"Now, Poley, we will read the Easter Eve service together, and then go to bed."

"I'm a Methodist, myself, you know, child; still I feel free to join you in that."

"Then I will give you my prayer-book, Poley, and you can read it with me. As for myself, I know it all by heart as well as I know the Lord's Prayer, having taken part in it all my life," said Palma.

Then the table became an altar, and the two women sat down to their devotions. The collect, the epistle and the gospel were all read, with reverent and devotional voices. Then the appropriate prayers were said. And lastly the hymn was sung:

" 'All is o'er—the pain, the sorrow,
Human taunt, and Satan's spite—
Death shall be despoiled to-morrow
Of the prey he grasps to-night.' "

"Oh, Poley!" said Palma, when the service was over, "how small and poor and unworthy do seem all our earthly cares at such a season as this. I am ashamed to be anxious about any earthly event."

"Yes, sister; true; amen; hallelujah!" responded Mrs. Pole, in her sincerest camp-meeting spirit.

Soon after this they went to bed; but neither of the two to sleep.

Palma was wakeful because she was vaguely troubled, she knew not why nor wherefore.

Mrs. Pole was wakeful because she was anxious about her charge.

In the middle of the night she heard Palma tossing on her bed and sighing profoundly.

She listened for a few minutes, and then perceiving that the girl was still restless, she spoke:

"Palma, child, what is the matter with you? Can't you go to sleep?"

"Oh, Poley, are you also awake? Have I disturbed you? Oh! it was so selfish and thoughtless in me to disturb you. I am so sorry, Poley," said the girl, in sincere contrition.

"Never mind me, deary. Keeping awake won't hurt me, once in a way—won't hurt me much. But can't you go to sleep, honey?"

"No, I cannot—I cannot."

"But why can't you?"

"I am haunted."

"Haunted?"

"Yes, haunted."

"By what, for goodness' sake, child? There be no ghosts nor nothing in this pleasant house, so what should you be haunted by?"

"Oh, by dreams and visions so gloomy—oh! so gloomy, Poley. It seems to me as if Cleve were in some deep trouble or deadly danger. Oh! I wish it were morning!—I wish it were morning!" replied the girl.

Mrs. Pole got out of bed, turned up the light of the kerosene lamp, and went to her traveling "physic box," muttering to herself:

"I'll soon settle these dreams and visions. I'll give her a dose of chloral. It will make her look awful pale in the morning—it always does, blame it!—but it will give her a good night's rest, anyhow, whereas, if she don't get a good night's rest, she'll not only look pale, but haggard and torn down, which will be ever so much worse."

So the nurse prepared the sleeping draught, and brought it to the bedside of the wakeful girl, saying:

"Here, take this, child. It is Dr. Ames' own prescription

for sleeplessness, you know, and it will give you rest, so you will wake up well to-morrow."

Willingly enough Palma swallowed the sleeping draught, and was soon buried in repose.

"I think I want one about as much as she does; but I don't propose to weaken my heart. No, not if I know it, I don't! I can stand a night's loss of sleep, I reckon, though I know she couldn't. Very strange, with all the arts and sciences, and the colleges and the universities, the learned doctors can't find any medicine to cure you in one place that don't half kill you in another! Now, there's laudanum. It will cure pain. Oh, yes! certain sure, it will cure pain; but, then, afterward it allers gets up a little deviltry of its own in your stummuck, or your liver, or some'ers! And so with all the rest," said Mrs. Pole, as she turned down the light and once more retired to bed, and afterward, fortunately, fell asleep.

And both the women slept long and deeply.

Mrs. Pole was the first to wake up in the morning. She found that it was late—that is, late for her, a hard-working woman, who was habitually up with the sun.

Now the sunshine was glinting through the interstices of the slats in the shutters of the front windows, and showing glimpses of blue sky and green earth.

Mrs. Pole left her bed and went over to the other corner of the room to Palma's side, and looked upon the sleeping girl. Palma was pale and fair, as she lay, "smiling in delight," at some happy dream or vision.

Satisfied with the inspection, Mrs. Pole went back, made up her own bed, and then washed and dressed herself, and set the room in order. There was light enough to see to do all that.

"Now the child has slept long enough for her good, and I will waken her this way," she said, and opened the front shutters, letting in a flood of light.

"Oh! what a glorious May day! Oh! what a divine Easter Sunday! The Resurrection morning and the Virgin Mary's month! What a splendid sky above! What a lovely earth beneath! Oh, Poley! have I died and gone to heaven? What has happened, Poley? Oh! what has happened?" inquired Palma, waking from her deep sleep with a sense of new life.

She gazed from her white bed all around the pleasant room, and through the open front windows upon the blue sky, rosy and gold-hued clouds, and the green-wooded hills.

"Did my opening the windows wake you up?" inquired Mrs. Pole.

"Oh, no! My sleep was over. Poley, dear, I feel so well! I feel as if I should get well and live long now!"

"All the phantoms gone?"

"What phantoms, Poley?"

"Ah! you have even forgotten them. The phantoms that haunted you last night, and made you believe in coming evil."

"Oh! I had forgotten them. Yes, they are all gone. I can believe in nothing but good this morning"

Mrs. Pole assisted her to rise, and put on the little faded blue cambric wrapper, in which she had lived since her illness, then guided her to the easy-chair by the front window, left her sitting there, and went out and brought her a cup of coffee.

"Only to begin with, child," she said. "Breakfast will be ready soon—fresh mackerel, tenderloin beefsteak and rice waffles. And I have got a good piece of news for you, my dear. You'll have your Easter service, after all There is one of your sort of ministers here—a 'Piscopal—come last night. A very agreeable old gentleman; too infirm to take a church; but serves a pulpit once in a while. So the waiter girls say. Yes, honey, him, and his wife, as old as himself. She is kin to the people in the house. So the gals told me."

"And is he going to hold an Easter service here?" inquired Palma, as she slowly sipped her coffee.

"In the big parlor—yes, child."

"Poley?"

"Yes, honey."

"Did you bring my white lawn dress?"

"Didn't I, honey? And sprinkle and press it as smooth as smooth could be."

"Thank you, Poley. It was my confirmation dress, given to me two years ago by dear Mrs. Barrn. Ah, Poley, I have had to sell nearly all my good clothes to buy food and fuel. But that dress I never would part with. And now I am glad, for I can wear it to the service this morning, and

be married in it this afternoon. Poley, you will manage to help me into the parlor and get me seated before the people come in, so that we need not disturb anybody."

"Yes, my child."

"Now, Poley, dear, bring the books, and we will have our morning prayers before breakfast," said the little ritualist.

Mrs. Pole believed in impulse and inspiration, not in rites and regulations; so she grunted, yet she did as she was requested to do.

When this ceremony was over, she put away the books and said:

"I told the girls to set the table in here. It was well enough to use the little sitting-room when there was a gentleman with us. But you and me can be more comfortable here."

"Yes, indeed, Poley."

A neat young waitress came in and laid the cloth and arranged the table for the morning meal, and then brought it in.

No one accustomed to good meals every day of their lives could appreciate the luxuries of the table as did this poor child, who had been half starved ever since the death of her benefactress. She ate with satisfaction and delight, and naïvely said to her attendant:

"Oh, Poley, it seems as if every morsel gives me life."

When the breakfast service had been removed, Mrs. Pole dressed her charge for church.

"Why, Poley, dear, you have put a ruffle on the bottom of my dress!" said the girl.

"Had to, my chile. You have growed some in height, these last two years. And it was too short for you. Likewise it would have been too small in the waist, only you have dwindled so thin, poor dear. I bought that ruffle on Grand Street, Friday night, when I went out shopping. It was already pleated and bound, and it was twenty-five cents a yard and took only four yards for your gown. I sewed it on after you were asleep last night."

"I ought to call you mother. You are a mother to me!" said the girl.

Palma looked very pretty in her soft, white dress, with an early white rose, brought by one of the waiter girls,

pinned on her bosom, and with no other ornament but her curling black hair, a lovely contrast to the pale, pure face. A young Saint Agnes she might have seemed to an ancient devotee.

"Dearie, you are beautiful," said Mrs. Pole, supporting her as she stood before the dressing glass.

A soft blush at this praise stole into the girl's delicate cheeks and made her prettier still, as she replied:

"Oh, I wish I might be, for Cleve's sake. And now, how many hours before he will be here?"

"Let me see. It is ten now, and he said he would be here by six."

"Eight hours to wait! Oh, it seems so long."

"But you will have the beautiful Easter service you love so well. And then the sermon, and I'll warrant you the reverend doctor will bring out the best in his barrel. And then dinner, and then the afternoon sleep. And so the time will soon pass away."

"Oh, no, it will not—it will be eight long—— Oh, Poley! There he is now! There is Cleve coming into the porch," she broke off and exclaimed.

"Sure enough, so he is. I wonder what have brought him here half a day too soon, and no parson with him, nuther?" said Mrs. Pole, with a sudden misgiving in regard to the gentleman's intentions.

But before she could give further expression to her doubts, Cleve Stuart had seen his betrothed through the open French windows, and greeted her with a smile and wave of hand.

"Oh, how glad I am to see you so much sooner than I hoped. Come right in here!" exclaimed Palma, as she stood up, supporting herself by one hand on the arm of her chair, while she stretched the other toward him.

"How lovely you are looking, my child! I never saw you look so lovely as you do this morning," he said, as he stepped through the window and took her in his arms and kissed her.

"If that is so, it is you who have brought the miracle. Oh, I hope it is not sinful to say so, but it seems to me that, on this Easter morning, the Lord has given you the power to raise even me from the dead."

"Ah, child, I am unworthy—unworthy of your warm

words. Unworthy—most unworthy of your pure self," he said, with a sigh of contrition.

"Oh, Cleve! And I such a poor, poor girl! But——"

"You are sweet and lovely in mind and person, sweetheart."

"But I want to live now, for your sake, so that I may make you happy. And I know I can make you so happy, because I want to do it so much. And God is good."

"Sit down, dear. You are trembling all over," said Cleve Stuart, as he placed her in her easy-chair.

"It is with happiness, Cleve, with the full, great happiness you give me. It is too much, you see, for this poor, little, fragile frame of mine," she answered, with a smile.

"But, sir, you have not told us how you come so much sooner than we expected you," said Mrs. Pole.

"Oh, good-morning, ma'am! Excuse me for not having seen you before. The explanation of my early arrival is easy enough. I saw in this morning's *Trumpeter* that the Rev. Dr. Shepherd was at the Pine Mountain House. It was but a single line in the religious intelligence column. But it was enough to tell me that I need not wait until after the morning services to hunt up a minister whom I might persuade to accompany me here. So I took a hasty breakfast, caught the eight-thirty train, and here I am in good time to attend the services at this house, and marry my dear girl afterward."

CHAPTER IX

THEIR WEDDING

"Oh, yes, and I am so glad that you have come so much sooner than we looked for you, and in good time for the morning service," said Palma.

"And for the noontide wedding," added Cleve.

"I wonder if people wear bonnets, when they go to church in the parlor of the hotel they are stopping at?" inquired Mrs. Pole.

"I don't know," murmured Palma, looking up for information at the face of Cleve Stuart.

"Yes," promptly replied the latter. "I have happened to be in hotels in the country, a long way from any church, when services were held in the largest available room, and all the ladies in the house wore their bonnets as if they had been in a cathedral."

"Then I'll go and brush up mine and her'n. They are both dusty enough, I reckon," concluded Mrs. Pole; and she went.

"Cleve," said Palma, in a low tone, as soon as they were left alone.

"Well, dear?"

"Oh, Cleve, I am only just beginning to realize how good and true you are. Your sudden visit to me last Friday was such a joyful surprise that I was dazzled and distracted, so that I could not think rationally. I was delighted, but not reasonable. Oh, Cleve, I did not appreciate all your love and faith! The love and faith that brought you to seek me out in all my weakness and misery, and take me out of purgatory and bring me into paradise! The more I think of you, the more I wonder at you. Oh, Cleve, what can I ever render you for all your goodness to me? Ah! only the Lord who gave me the blessing of your love can show me how to be grateful enough!" she said, with tearful eyes, in a trembling tone, as she slipped her thin, white hand in his.

He pressed the given hand, and held it, but turned away his face from her eyes, as he answered, in a low voice:

"Your words of praise hurt, pain me, Palma. If you knew all, you would know how they must do so, since I am most unworthy of them. Yet, though unworthy, I do mean to try to make you happy, dear child."

"Oh, Cleve, you have made me happy! You do make me happy—as happy as anybody can be outside of heaven. God bless you, Cleve! Oh, God bless you and love you and gladden you forever and ever, dearest dear Cleve!"

He bent his head over the hand he held, and kept it bent as in prayer or in humility.

She went on speaking, for her heart was full to overflowing, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh":

"You always made me happy—oh, my guardian angel, you did! After I had lost my father and my mother, and I

was a poor, little orphan child in Judge Barrn's house, depending on Mrs. Barrn's charity, and, oh! so sad and lonely you came to live in the house, and you brought me happiness. Other people were good and kind to me; they fed and clothed me; but you, Cleve, loved and petted me, and it was then, when I was a little child, that you won my whole heart and soul forever and ever!"

"Who could help loving you? You were such a confiding and endearing little creature," said Stuart, pressing the finger that he held.

She took his hand in both of hers, and hugged it to her bosom, as she continued:

"And as your coming into the house was my first happiness, so your departure, years later, was my first great sorrow; greater than the loss of my parents had been, for I was, at the time of their departure, too young to fully realize the bereavement."

She held his hand fondly up to her face, and then gently put it down.

"Do you remember what a foolish little thing I was in the days preceding your departure? How I used to follow you up and down the walks of the garden at Harlem, with my singsong of: 'Oh, Cleve don't go!' 'Oh, Cleve, don't go!' As if my childish prayers and tears could have kept a young man back from his coveted career."

"I wish now that they could have done so, my dear. I wish I had never left the baby sweetheart who was trying with baby hands to hold me. I wish I had never left you. I wish we had never parted. I should have been a happier man to-day," earnestly replied Stuart.

"Are you not happy, then, Cleve? Are you not happy?" inquired Palma, with tender solicitude.

"More happy, dear, than I deserve to be," replied Stuart, with a smile that masked his troubled face, yet scarcely deceived the searching eyes of anxious affection.

"But not quite happy? Not nearly so happy as you 'deserve to be'! What is it, then, Cleve? What did you say? If we had never parted, you should have been a happier man to-day?"

"My little girl, if I had not gone to Europe, I should not, like the prodigal son, have spent all my patrimony."

"Oh, is that it?" inquired Palma, with a sigh of relief,

and with all the indifference of childhood to the loss or gain of money. "But you did not 'waste' your 'substance,' as the prodigal son did, in 'riotous living.' You spent it in travel and in the pursuit of knowledge. And you have its worth in wisdom and experience. Do you think you could have 'invested,' as they say, to better advantage?"

"I think very likely I might have done so, Palma. I gained some knowledge and experience, but I doubt very much about the wisdom. However, this may be said of me, that when I went away I had no intention of staying so long. In fact, from month to month, after leaving Heidelberg, I expected to return home."

"Oh, I remember. It almost broke my little baby heart to have you go at all. If I had known what a lifetime you would be absent, I think it would have killed me outright. Ah! what a heartbroken little idiot I was in those days! But Mrs. Barrn—God bless her!—always talked to me of your coming back. I thought of nothing but your coming back. You were always coming back. I grew into the happy habit of looking forward to your coming back. But, Cleve, I must tire you with all this babble!" she said, with sudden self-reproach.

"No, dear, no," he replied, passing his hand caressingly over her black hair. "No; I like these glimpses into your true heart. The time seemed tedious, then, to my little sweetheart?"

"Yes; but it was brightened and enlivened by that continual looking forward to your coming."

"But how was it, dear, that you fell into such poverty after the judge and his good wife died?"

"Oh, I don't know! They were an aged couple, you see. They had lived so long together that, perhaps, they could not live apart. Their deaths came very near together. The judge went first, you know. I suppose he left all that he had to leave to his wife, and thought, of course, that she would take care of me as long as she lived. But she lived only a few days, and then went off suddenly, without having made any will, even if she had anything to leave. I heard it said that the creditors had held off until the death of Mrs. Barrn; but, after the funeral, there was a sale, and everything went under the auctioneer's hammer."

"And you, dear child?"

"I was homeless and destitute; but Mrs. Pole—dear Poley there—who was the laundress of the Barrn family, brought me to her own home, and got needlework for me from the ready-made clothing stores."

"Poor little Palma!"

"Oh, but I was not unhappy—then! After I had done crying for Mrs. Barrn and the judge, and took to thinking of them as united in heaven, I grew quite cheerful and buoyant, for I was again looking forward to your return home. I felt so sure you would come this time."

"And I did come this time. But I found you ill. What caused your illness, little girl?" he inquired, taking her hand and gently drawing her toward him.

She laid her forehead on his shoulder, and answered, in a low tone, full of truth, thrilling with pathos:

"I will tell you, Cleve—yes, I will tell you now. I will confess to you, who will so soon have the right to search my heart to its innermost."

"Little Palma, I should never, under any circumstances, assert such a right, or any other right that your love did not freely give me. But let me hear what you wish to tell me, dear."

"This, then, was what made me ill—the strain of hope, anxiety and disappointment from hour to hour, from day to day, and from week to week, until hope, anxiety and disappointment were all merged in despair."

"But how was that, dear?"

"I will tell you. I was daily expecting your return. That anticipation kept up my spirits. As the time for your expected arrival drew near I used to go every morning to the newsstand kept by a boy at the corner of the street, and ask him to let me look at a morning paper, to see the arrivals by ocean steamers. One day—it was months ago—I saw yours. And, oh! the joy—the overwhelming joy—of that moment, Cleve! You would hardly believe it. I grew so faint and blind with joy that the boy jumped up and pushed me down in his seat, and ran into the shop and brought me a glass of water; and then, when I had partly recovered, he asked me if I had seen the death of a friend in the paper."

"Dear little girl! And yet, you had been expecting me so long, it could scarcely have been a surprise."

"But it was—a joyful, overwhelming surprise. You see, I had been used to looking for your return for so many years, with so many disappointments, that the fact of your actual presence in the country gave me a shock of delight. I went home and told Poley, and then I sat by the front window in the garret passage, and watched all the rest of the day for you. I could not sew. I could not settle myself to anything. Oh, you see, I was a little fool. I thought you would hurry to see me at once."

"My poor child, I would have done so if I had known where to come. I made many inquiries about you, but no one could give me any information. I was still searching for you when accident gave me your address, and then I came."

"It was through Miss Griffiths, our district visitor, Cleve?"

"Yes, through her and a mutual—acquaintance."

"It is all past now; but, oh, Cleve! what a rack—what a strain of anxiety and expectation, hope and disappointment, tortured me from hour to hour, from day to day, and from week to week, until all were sunk in one black despair. I thought you did not care for me, and I—did not care to live. I could not work. I could not eat. I could not sleep. At length I could not walk or stand. Yet there was nothing the matter with me but a great heaviness of heart. There! I am talking too much about myself. But I must say this much more. I prayed that you might come to me before I should die. I prayed even after I had ceased to hope. And, oh! then when you came, Cleve! It was such an overwhelming delight to see you! I did not dream—I never did dream—that you would ever think of marrying me, Cleve! But I thought you would be, as in the old time, like a dear, dear, dear elder brother."

"And would you rather I had taken up again that rôle of elder brother, instead of asking you to have me for your husband, Palma?"

"Oh, no, no! I would much rather we should be married, since you wish it, and since now we need never be parted. Oh! dear Cleve! I am ashamed to have talked so much about myself."

"But why? I led you on to talk, dear child. I wished

to know your heart. It was only to me you talked, remember."

"Yes; only to you," she answered, softly.

"Well, Miss Hay, here I have been standing for about five minutes with your hat in my hand, waiting for you to put it on," said Mrs. Pole, coming from the other end of the room with a small white chip bonnet, simply trimmed with a band and strings of white mull.

"Oh! did you make that for me, Poley?" inquired Palma, in surprise and pleasure.

"Not much! I bought it in Grand Street, where I got the flounces to eke out your white muslin dress, because I thought it would complete the suit. Price of hat, fifty cents; price of lisle-thread gloves, twenty ditto. So here you are, neatly got up, if not so grandly."

"I think it should be grandly, since the items came from Grand Street," said Palma, with a smile.

"Surely!" exclaimed Mrs. Pole.

Just then a bell began to ring.

"That's to call the people to worship. Come along, child, and settle yourself in this chair, and I'll wheel you in," said Mrs. Pole.

"No, no. No, no. It is too late for that, now. The congregation are gathering; the people would see such a remarkable manner of entering. It would distract their attention. Besides, I feel so much stronger, now that Cleve has come. I know I can walk very well, leaning on Cleve's arm," said Palma, holding out her hand to him.

He took it and drew it over his arm, and then looked down on her. She was a pretty and dainty little creature, as she stood smiling up into his face, dressed as she was in the simplest of all simple ways—in white muslin frock, with a broad sash of the same material passed around her waist, and tied in a large bow behind, and a white chip hat, with a wide band passed over it, and tied in a big bow under her chin. It was a childish, almost an infantile, style of dress, but it was suited to her; and Cleve Stuart liked her in it.

"She will be my child—only my child—as long as she may live, poor little soul!" he said to himself, as he supported her fragile form as well as he could in leading her from the room.

The great hall of the house was in frequent use for exhibitions of all sorts—for lectures, for political meetings and for concerts.

On this occasion it was arranged for divine service. A platform and desk had been placed at the upper end, carpeted and draped for altar and pulpit. The communion table was also set in the space near the pulpit, and covered with the "fair linen cloth" of the rules. The body of the hall was provided with chairs, set in orderly rows, and leaving an aisle up the center.

There were about fifty people present, gathered from the house and from the neighborhood; and in the corner of the hall, on the right of the pulpit, stood a parlor organ, at which sat a volunteer organist. Standing on the platform was the venerable minister, in his white robes.

"It is not St. Paul's Cathedral, or even Grace Church," said Cleve Stuart, as he led Palma into the hall; "but——"

"But it is sweet and holy and beautiful, for all that," replied Palma, in a low voice, as she walked slowly up the aisle, leaning on his arm, followed by Mrs. Pole.

He led her to a shady side seat where she could not attract attention, and where the three seated themselves.

The services began with the outburst of a joyful anthem, in which all the country congregation joined most heartily, if not quite harmoniously.

Then followed the Scriptures, prayers, psalms and hymns appropriate to the day, and Easter songs as rapturous as the carolings of birds in the wild woodlands. Then came the sermon, and lastly the communion service.

Palma, reclining in her corner, almost hidden in its shadows, bore the fatigue of sitting through the long service because she deeply felt and enjoyed its beauty and sublimity.

When the holy writ was over, and the benediction was given, Cleve Stuart led Palma from the hall back to her room, and placed her in her resting chair, and untied and took off her bonnet. Physically, she looked very pale and weary, but mentally she was bright and cheerful.

Mrs. Pole got for her a glass of ice cold milk punch.

While she sipped it, Cleve Stuart said:

"Take care of her, Mrs. Pole, while I go out to find the

minister. I wish to get this ceremony over as quickly as possible, so that my child may rest."

"Very well, sir. She shall lie down as soon as she has finished her punch. She will be all right in a little while—that is, I mean, as near right as we can hope for her to be," replied the nurse.

Cleve Stuart went straight to the office of the hotel, and inquired of the clerk:

"Where shall I find the clergyman who preached this morning?"

"He is still in the hall, alone, I think—resting after his labors."

"I will go, then," said Cleve.

He found the reverend doctor still in his official vestments, reclining in the chair behind the reading desk.

Cleve Stuart advanced reverently up the hall, and stepped upon the platform.

The minister arose, and looked inquiringly upon the intruder.

"Can I speak to you for a few moments, reverend sir?" asked the young man.

"Certainly, sir," replied the aged minister, who now recognized in his visitor the young man who had knelt beside the fair girl at the communion that morning.

With this permission, Cleve Stuart explained his business and told his story, or as much of it as he deemed it well to tell; how he wished to be married immediately to the young girl whom he brought to the house.

The doctor stared, and did not forbear to say:

"But, my young friend, how is this? She looks more fit for heaven than earth."

"Yes, I know it!"

"And she is but a child."

"That is true. She is only about sixteen, I think."

"And where are her parents or guardians?"

"She has none. They are all dead to this world at least. Nor have I any who have the right to be consulted in this matter. My parents are in heaven these many years, and I am rather too old for guardians."

"Yes, I see that. I was not thinking of you, but of that child—that fading child. Where are her friends?"

"The only two she has are in this house with her, and

one of them stands before you to ask you to give him the right to take care of her while she lives."

"Before I do this, will you answer one question?"

"Certainly! Any question you may think fit to ask."

"Why do you wed her?"

"I thank God," earnestly exclaimed the young man, "that I can answer that question now, without hesitation or humiliation. I marry her because I have known and esteemed her from her childhood. We lived several years together in our youth, in the family of the late Judge Barrn, of Harlem. I was his ward. Palma Hay was his wife's protégée. I went to Europe seven or eight years ago. During my absence the judge and his wife passed away. On my return I found this child, Palma, dying, as every one said, in a poor tenement house. I wished to take her out of her surroundings, and bring her into healthier and happier atmospheres. I could not do so without marrying her—I had no right. I brought her here yesterday, and left her in charge of a good woman. I came here this morning to make her my wife, though she may be dying, that I may take care of her while she lives. Now do you understand?"

The minister dropped his head upon his hands and reflected.

"Must I speak more plainly? I wed her because she is an orphan, homeless, friendless, destitute, dying; because she loves me, and—I love her."

"That will do. I will perform the ceremony with great pleasure, remembering that some marriages are made for heaven as well as 'in heaven.' God bless you, my son," said the venerable minister, with much feeling.

"I thank you, sir, with all my soul. When will it be most convenient for you to give us both your blessing?"

"Whenever you please. Now, before I leave this place, if you like."

"But are you not fatigued?"

"No. I am refreshed. You have refreshed me, young sir," with a peculiar smile.

Cleve Stuart looked perplexed.

"It is not often that one meets a lover so unselfish that he wishes to marry his slowly dying sweetheart solely that he may take care of her," said the minister, in explanation.

"Do you think that she is dying?" sadly inquired the young man.

"My friend, you must see for yourself that it is so. Even if you deceive yourself, it would be wrong for me to deceive you. Yet I think that, under all the peculiar circumstances, you are right to marry her. When do you wish the ceremony to be performed?"

"At your earliest convenience, sir."

"It is convenient now."

"Then, I will go and bring Palma."

"And two witnesses, and some good man to give her away. Mr. Lull will do if you have no one else."

"I thank you, doctor. I will do as you direct," replied Cleve Stuart, and with another bow he left the hall.

He went straight to Palma's room. She was lying down on the outside of her bed, and Mrs. Pole was sitting by her.

Palma arose as she saw him enter. He went up to her and took her hand.

"Do you feel well enough to go through the marriage ceremony now, dear?" he inquired.

"Yes, Cleve, any time that you and the minister may fix," she replied.

"Then let Mrs. Pole put on your bonnet and gloves, while I go and find Mr. and Mrs. Lull, who will attend us as witnesses," concluded Cleve Stuart, as he left the room.

He found them both on the back piazza. He explained the situation and made his request.

"Well!" said the hostess. "If it ain't strange! I was just saying to Mr. Lull that if yonder young lady had not looked so very ill I should have taken this for a runaway match; and so it is, after all!"

"But you are mistaken. We have neither of us any one to run away from. I brought the young lady for change of air, and we marry here because it is convenient. Will you be a witness?" inquired Cleve.

"Oh! with the greatest pleasure in life, and so will Lull," replied the hostess, speaking for both.

"I shall also ask Mr. Lull to do another favor for me—to act as church father for the young lady."

"Oh! of course Lull will do that. Won't you, Lull?"

"Proud to!" replied the host.

"Well, now I will go and put on my bonnet, and won't be a minute about it," exclaimed the landlady, jumping up and running into the house.

In a few minutes she returned, dressed for the occasion. Then Cleve Stuart went to bring out Palma, who sat with her hat on in the easy-chair, waiting.

He took her hand, drew her arm within his own and led her out. The little procession was soon formed—Mr. and Mrs. Lull leading the way, Mrs. Pole and Clerk Lull coming next, and Cleve Stuart and Palma Hay bringing up the rear.

So they entered, and passed up the hall to the front of the improvised altar, where stood the aged minister in his vestments, book in hand.

The foremost couples parted right and left, leaving Cleve and Palma standing in the middle of the semi-circle. Cleve, in a low voice, introduced his bride-elect to the minister, who greeted her with a warm pressure of his hand. Then the young pair knelt and the parson opened his prayer book and commenced the rites.

When the question was asked:

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

Lemuel Lull stepped forward proudly, took Palma's hand and placed it in that of Cleve, saying:

"I do."

The ceremony proceeded to its conclusion, and then, when the benediction had been pronounced and the written certificate of marriage had been given to the bride, and the minister's official work was all over, he still added some words of comfort and encouragement to the pale bride and the troubled bridegroom.

"Now you must, all of you, come right into my private parlor, and open a bottle of champagne in honor of this occasion. And, Lull, do you go down in the cellar and fetch one of the best of Heidsieck. Yes, I insist on it!" said the landlady, when they had left the hall.

And she led the way to her own apartments, followed by all the party except the reverend doctor, who joined it some ten minutes later, after he had laid off his sacred vestments and resumed his citizen's dress.

The champagne was opened, and each one, in courtesy to the hostess, took one modest glass and no more.

Then Cleve was permitted to lead his bride to her apartment, where he left her in charge of Mrs. Pole, to rest until dinner time.

"Are you happy, dear?" he whispered, as he took off her little white hat and laid her back in her chair.

"Oh, Cleve! in a heaven of perfect peace and rest and trust," she answered, taking his hand and pressing it to her heart and to her lips. "And you, Cleve? Are you happy?" she inquired, with strange wistfulness.

"Much happier, dear child, than I deserve to be."

"Oh, don't say that! You deserve—you deserve—all the happiness in this world and heaven in the next!"

"Little enthusiast! If I escape eternal perdition I shall do well. But, there—I have shocked you. Try to rest and sleep now until dinner," he said, and he laid his hand on her black curls, kissed her and left the room.

He went out to make some new arrangement with the landlord.

Meanwhile, all through the house the rumor of the strange marriage had run. Every one who had been present at the religious services in the hall remembered the fair, fragile girl, in spotless white dress, who had been led up to the communion table by the tall, handsome young man, and when they learned that this pair had been quietly married after the morning services their curiosity to see them again and get a better view of their personalities became intense. Every one looked forward to the dinner to get sight of the bride and groom.

But they were disappointed.

The newly married pair dined in their private sitting room, if not exactly *tête-à-tête*, yet with only one other companion—their faithful friend and attendant, Mrs. Pole.

Nor did they join the group on the front piazza that evening. They sat at the open windows of their own apartment, preserving their own privacy, while enjoying the evening air and the moutain scenery, until a late hour.

Mrs. Pole had retired earlier to the new room engaged for her, but had left a request that she might be called at any time of the night if her services should be required for the delicate invalid.

But Cleve Stuart had begged her to rest well, as he himself was quite capable of taking care of his wife.

And for many days Cleve Stuart, the favorite of fashion, was missed from the drawing rooms and clubs of the Empire City.

CHAPTER X

THE CIRCE AT WORK

Cleve Stuart had not failed to send a notice of his marriage to all the city papers.

So on Monday morning Lamia Leegh, looking over the columns of the *Trumpeter,* lighted upon these lines in the list of marriage notices:

"Stuart-Hay.—At Pine Mountain House, on Sunday, May 1st, by the Rev. Dr. Shepherd, Mr. Cleve Stuart, of Cypress Shades, Mississippi, to Miss Palma Christa Hay, only daughter of the late Capt. James Jordan Hay, of Haywood, England."

"So it is done," she said, and she set her teeth and clenched her fists in impotent rage.

But that was not all.

Where do not the newspaper reporters go? What do they not know? They seemed to be omnipresent and omniscient. And, like the prince in the fairy tale, invisible, when most active.

A reporter had evidently been at the Pine Mountain House on Easter Sunday, for on another page of the newspaper was a very sensational paragraph, headed:

"A ROMANTIC MARRIAGE ON THE HUDSON

"A Very Affecting Ceremony—A young Southern gentleman returns from Europe after many years' absence, to find the little sweetheart of his boyhood dying of decline and marries her, that he may be with and take care of her in her last hours."

Then followed a detailed description of the wedding of Cleve Stuart and Palma Hay.

Lamia Leegh read all this through and ground her teeth. Others read it also. Among them, Miss Leegh's employer, Mrs. Vansitart.

"Why, my dear," said the latter lady, coming into the drawing room, where Lamia sat alone that morning, "look at this!" and she pointed out the sensational paragraph in the *Age*.

"I have seen it in the *Trumpeter*, and also in the *Globe*," replied Miss Leegh.

"What? This account of young Stuart's marriage with some girl he had known in his boyhood?"

"Oh, yes! In the dearth of other news it seems to be in all the papers."

"But—I had supposed—that he was engaged to you," said the lady, in surprise.

"Not at all," haughtily replied the young lady. "I should never have dreamed of marrying Cleve Stuart. So far from that, it was I who advised him to marry Miss Hay!"

"You!"

"Yes, madam, I!"

"For what reason, in the name of Heaven?"

"For no reason at all. From the merest whim. I challenged him to do it. I had no idea that he would take me at my word, but you see he has done so."

"From pique, no doubt. For whether you ever dreamed of marrying him or not, he certainly aspired to marry you. Come, now, did he not propose to you? And did you not refuse him?" archly inquired the elder lady.

"A true woman does not boast of her rejected conquests, Mrs. Vansitart; but since you ask me—yes—he offered me his hand, and I advised him to bestow it on his first love. You see he has followed my advice."

"In pique, as I said. Well, as the poor girl is dying of consumption, she will never live to feel the bitterness of such a marriage. By the way—'Hay!' The name is not common. I wonder if she can be any relation of Mr. Randolph Hay, the heir of Haymore?"

"Why, of course. She is his first cousin. They are brothers' children. Did you not see in the marriage notice that she is called the only daughter of the late Capt. James Jordan Hay, of Haymore?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure."

"And don't you remember that it was this very same Capt. James Jordan Hay, who was advertised for, when Mr. Randolph Hay, the son of his elder brother, turned up with his prior claim to the heirship of Haymore?"

"Why, certainly. How stupid and forgetful I have been. But, then, I was not particularly interested in the Hay family. I wonder, however, if Mr. Randolph Hay is acquainted with his cousin?"

"I do not know whether he is even acquainted with her existence. And as young gentlemen are not apt to be proud of their poor relations, I for one shall not bring her to his knowledge in any way."

"Bless my soul! Talk of the evil one, and you know what follows. Here is Mr. Randolph Hay coming up the stairs," said Mrs. Vansitart.

Two minutes later Mr. Randolph Hay was announced and entered the drawing room.

Mrs. Vansitart really had a pressing engagement, and so she slipped away before her presence could be detected in the obscurely lighted drawing room, leaving Miss Leegh to entertain the visitor.

The Easter holidays were religiously observed by this high church family; so that there were no lessons for this day, and the governess was free to bestow her time upon her caller; not that he knew she was the governess, or that she intended he should ever know it, if she could prevent him. She had "other views."

Lamia Leegh had loved Cleve Stuart as well as she was capable of loving any one; but she had not loved him as well as she loved herself. She had not loved him enough to accept the offer of his hand to share with him his small, precarious income. She had refused to marry him until he should have made or gained money.

For this end she had used all her great power over him to tempt him to marry the supposed dying heiress, Palma Hay, and she rejoiced when she thought she had succeeded in her plot.

But when she discovered that Palma Hay's imaginary claims to a fine estate were set aside by the appearance of a nearer claimant; when, for that reason, she sought to break off the engagement, but found that the young man meant

to be true to his betrothed—then, and from that time, her love—that was so much made up of self-love—turned to hatred.

Now her soul was possessed by two longings—to be revenged on her revolted slave, Cleve Stuart, and to advance the interests of her idol, Lamia Leegh.

She thought that by winning and marrying Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore, she might accomplish both ends—wring the heart of her late lover and establish her own dear self in a high social position.

So she determined to use all her arts to captivate and subjugate the heir.

She received Mr. Randolph Hay with the sweetest grace and affability, apologized for the absence of Mrs. Vansitart, and hoped that the unusually warm spring weather had not prejudiced Mr. Hay against our capricious climate; and so forth.

Mr. Hay replied gallantly that he could not regret the absence of any one—not even of the charming Mrs. Vansitart—since it gave him the great pleasure of a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Leegh.

And he spoke sincerely. He had already become interested in the beautiful blonde.

He made quite a long morning call, during which Lamia Leegh succeeded in deepening the favorable impression which she perceived that she had made.

He told her—among other matters that he confided, or pretended to confide to her—that he might be obliged to sail for England in a few days, unless certain formalities connected with his entering into the possession of his estate could be arranged by correspondence with his London solicitors.

Miss Leegh expressed much polite regret at the prospect of his departure.

Whereupon he assured her, in all earnestness, that if he should be compelled to go he should depart not only with regret, but with deep sorrow, from the happy country that contained so charming a friend—if he might have the privilege of calling Miss Leegh his friend.

Lamia had blushes, tears and sighs always at command; but she had only known this man three days, and had only seen him three times—on Saturday evening at home, on

Sunday morning at Trinity Church, and on this Monday morning at home again; so it was rather too early in their acquaintance to bring such warm ammunition into play.

She replied, coolly and sweetly, that she should always esteem it a privilege to be called the friend of Mr. Hay.

By this you may see that they were getting on pretty well, for the third meeting.

He prolonged his call until the return of Mrs. Vansitart —who looked somewhat surprised to find him still there— and then he arose to take leave.

The elder lady, reflecting that the visitor was a stranger in the city, from the kindness of her heart felt some compassion for him, and invited him to come often—to come whenever he pleased, without further notice—to use the house as his own, and so on.

He thanked her cordially, bowed himself out, and—afterward availed himself of the privilege she had given him.

He called daily, and sometimes stayed to dinner.

He always asked for Miss Leegh.

And, though she might be in the schoolroom, she always received his card, and went down to see him; for Mrs. Vansitart soon saw in the wealthy Englishman a possible husband for the beautiful governess, and, in her great benevolence, she wished to promote the marriage. So she begged Lamia never to send word that she was engaged, but always to leave the schoolroom at any hour when Mr. Hay might call to see her.

Lamia thanked her considerate friend, and promised to use the privilege she offered her.

One day, when Mr. Hay called in the morning, he asked Miss Leegh a question. It is not polite to put questions, but he might be almost excused for this one:

"Your name is English. It is a Hants name. You are related to the Leeghs, of Edge, in Hants?"

"I am the niece of Baron Leegh, of Edge Castle, and the daughter of the late Rev. Archibald Leegh, of Edge Vicarage; but since the death of my parents I have lived here with Mr. and Mrs. Vansitart, or traveled with them. They were my guardians during my minority, and are like second parents to me now," said Lamia Leegh, in a trembling tone, assumed for the occasion.

"I have awakened painful associations. Oh, I am very

sorry! Pray, pardon me. Lord Leegh's niece? I might have known it by your likeness to the family," said Mr. Hay.

"You knew them, then?" inquired Lamia, looking up with tearful eyes.

"Intimately," replied Mr. Hay.

And it would be hard to tell which of these two worthies were—inventing—fastest; for there was no word of truth in either of their stories. Mr. Hay nor Miss Leegh knew nothing of the Leeghs, of Hants, except through the pages of "Burke's Peerage."

"But I did not come here this morning, my dear Miss Leegh, to inquire into your pedigree," he said, handing her a card, and adding: "The accidental sight of this bit of pasteboard, bearing your name, and picked up from the carpet, led me into an impertinence, I fear, and——"

"Oh, not at all," she hastened to reply. "Your question was a most natural one, coming from one compatriot to another."

"Thank you. I have told you what did not, now shall I tell you what did bring me here so early this morning?"

"Certainly, if you please," responded Miss Leegh, with a smile that seemed to imply that the pleasure of seeing herself might be supposed to be a sufficiently well understood motive.

"I came," he said, very gravely, "to tell you that, after all, I shall have to go to England. Those tiresome lawyers insist on my presence there. So I sail on Saturday next for Liverpool."

"I am very sorry you must go," replied Lamia, and her face paled as she feared that this rich prize was slipping away from her hold.

"Do you really care whether I go or stay?" he inquired. Then, as she only cast down her eyes and sighed, he continued, without waiting for his answer:

"But I shall not stay long. I do not intend to live in England. As soon as my claim is established, and I have entered into the possession of my patrimonial estate, I shall let Haymore and return to this country. Will you welcome me back?"

"No friend of yours will welcome you more warmly," replied the young lady.

"And now, Miss Leegh—dearest Lamia, if I may call you so—may I speak on a subject much nearer my heart than the heritage of Haymore?" he inquired, dropping his voice to the lowest tones.

Her "silence" gave "consent," and he continued:

"You must have seen the deep interest I have taken in you from the first moment of our meeting. That interest has deepened daily. May I hope that it is, in some small degree, at least, reciprocated by you?"

He paused.

She gave him an encouraging glance, and he continued:

"You understand. I should leave the country in a much happier and more confident state of mind if I could carry with me your promise to become my wife on my return."

Again he paused and looked at her.

She raised her eyes to meet his gaze, and silently laid her hand in his.

"You have made me the happiest man on earth," he said, as he raised her hand to his lips.

Then he slipped a diamond ring on her finger. And so Gentleman Geff and Miss Leegh were betrothed.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRAGEDY IN THE HOLLOW

On the night of the second of April, about the time that Gentleman Geff's bullet stopped the song of praise on Ran Hay's lips, a stalwart hunter sat at the door of his log hut, smoking his pipe and gazing at the stars.

The hut stood against a high wooded bank, on one side of a deep, narrow vale, with a stream of water running through its bottom.

Suddenly the hunter's reverie was broken by the sharp report of a pistol from the forest above and behind him.

He started up, faced about and listened, but all was still for a few minutes.

Then came the crashing sound of something falling from the steep, caught by the branches of the trees, breaking through them, and finally rolling down a dead weight at the feet of the hunter.

He laid down his pipe, stooped and looked at the body.

"Jee-ru-salem!" he exclaimed, "it is a man."

Then he turned the body over, with the face to the sky.

"A murdered man!" he added.

He went into his hut, lighted a candle, brought it out and peered into the pallid face, then holding the light in his left hand, he opened the victim's coat, vest and shirt with his right, and found the latter wet with blood.

"Shot through the breast; shot through the heart, most like, poor devil. Only a boy."

He went on with his investigation.

"Not so sure about that, however. No, by jingo! the heart is beating. Weakly enough, the Lord knows, but beating."

With these words he carried the candle back to the hut, stuck it in a knot hole in the wall and returned to the wounded stranger.

We said the hunter was a stalwart hunter. He was even more than that. He was a Hercules in size and strength, nerve and muscle, without an ounce too much of flesh. He lifted the wounded man as easily, as tenderly, as a nurse lifts a child, and bore him into the hut and laid him on the bed of skins.

Then the hunter lighted two more candles and stuck them up against the wall over the stranger that he might see him better.

"Been shot through the breast but not through the heart, the Lord be praised. But what's this? A broken head? He must have got that by his fall. He would have had a broken neck as well if that fall hadn't been first broken by the trees," muttered the Hercules, as he unfastened all the stranger's clothes.

Then he went and poured out some very bad whisky from a stone jug into a tin cup, and returned to his patient, and raised the head with his left arm, while he poured the whisky slowly into the mouth with his right hand. Two-thirds of the liquor trickled down over the corners of the mouth; but a little ran down the man's throat, half strangled him, but was also half swallowed.

"I reckon I shall have to go to the fort and fetch the surgeon," said the hunter, laying the head of the wounded

man on his pillow, and seeing that he showed no signs of returning consciousness.

"Yes; I reckon I will have to go for the surgeon at the fort," he concluded, as he settled the limbs of the stranger.

Then he secured the candles safely in the niches in the wall, and went out of the hut, closing the door behind him. He crossed the stream of water by leaping from stone to stone, and gained the other side. Then he began to climb the wooded bank, until he gained the top of an elevated plain, where the trees grew sparsely and finally ceased to appear.

He walked on a mile or more over the open plain until he came to the outer walls of the litle fort.

He could but dimly see the wall, built of upright logs planted closely side by side, forty feet in height, and secured and strengthened by heavy, horizontal beams, clamped along the top.

He went to the gate, where a sentinel stood on guard, and who challenged him with:

"Who comes there?"

"A friend!" was the stereotyped answer of the hunter.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"Oh, I don't know any countersign. But you know me well, Dick Talboys. I am Sampson Longman. There's a man shot to death down in my cabin, and I want the surgeon right away."

"What do you want of the surgeon if the man is shot to death?" coolly demanded the soldier.

"Well, because he ain't quite dead yet, and the doctor may do something for him. One never can tell, while the breath is in a man's body, how it's going to end with him; for 'while there's life there's hope!' But, oh, I say, it is a case of life and death, and I want the doctor double-quick," said the hunter, impatiently.

"You'll have to wait until I am relieved. Then I'll go and look up the surgeon."

"How long will that be?"

"Half an hour, I guess."

"And he may die in that time; but, I suppose, it cannot be helped."

"How did the man get shot?" asked the soldier.

"Don't know. Happened to be sitting in the door of my

cabin, smoking of a pipe and enjoying of the air, when I heard the crack of a pistol in the woods over my head. I leaped up mighty sudden, I tell you, and faced round, but didn't hear no more for about five minutes; just then, when I was going to sit down and take up my pipe again, there comes something tumbling and crashing down through the timber, and rolling over right at my feet. I knelt down to take a look, and found the man—a young man, a mere boy —with a wounded breast and a broken head. Thought he was dead, but felt his heart beat faintly. Took him up and carried him in and laid him on my bed, and tried to make him swallow some whisky. No go—or not much. Couldn't fetch him to, so started off for the surgeon. Oh, say! Let me by to find the doctor," pleaded the hunter.

"You know that I can't."

"Well, then, go for him yourself, and I will wait here until you come back."

"Don't be a fool, Longman. You know it is as much as my life would be worth to leave my post. You must wait here until I am relieved, and then I will go for Dr. Hill myself."

"Well, I suppose I must just put up with that," said the hunter, as he squatted down on the outside of the picket wall, took out his pipe and began to smoke.

But little more was said between the sentinel at the gate and the hunter outside the walls, until the corporal of the guard passed his rounds and brought the relief.

"A wounded stranger lying at Longman's cabin!" exclaimed the corporal, when the situation had been explained to him. "Then, Talboys, as soon as you are off duty, and that will be in half a minute, go and report the case to Dr. Hill. He hasn't turned in yet, I know."

"And can't you let me by to see the doctor myself?" inquired the hunter.

"Course not. You know that just as well as I do," answered the corporal. "You wait till you hear from the doctor."

Meanwhile Talboys scudded off to the surgeon's quarters, which adjoined the small hospital, in the left-hand corner of the rear wall. The door was open, and the light within showed the doctor and the lieutenant playing a game of cribbage at a small table in the middle of the room.

Hearing a sound from without, the doctor looked up, and saw the soldier, who immediately saluted and stood at attention.

"Well, my man, what is it?" inquired Surgeon Hill.

"If you please, sir, a stranger, lying badly hurt down at Longman's, wants help," replied the soldier.

The doctor arose instantly, leaving the game in his adversary's hand, the instinct of the healing minister in the ascendant.

"Who brought the news?" he inquired.

"If you please, sir, Longman himself."

"Where is he?"

"Outside. Didn't know the countersign, and couldn't pass."

"I will speak to the colonel. Come with me. Excuse me, lieutenant. Duty before pleasure, you know," said the surgeon, as he took his cap from its peg, bowed to his companion and left the room.

There were strains of music, as well as streams of light, coming from the colonel's quarters, which occupied a central position within the courtyard.

They found the colonel, with his wife and daughters, and some of the young officers of the fort, engaged in a parlor concert. A young lady was seated at the piano, playing the air of a popular song, in which all the company joined in singing.

The doctor entered, bowed and smiled around the room, and then spoke in a subdued voice, apart to the colonel, who answered in the same low tone.

"A stranger dangerously wounded at Longman's? Certainly, certainly, doctor. Take anything that may be needed. Take four men and a stretcher, and bring the man into the hospital if necessary. Certainly, doctor, certainly."

The surgeon bowed himself out of the colonel's quarters, and, still followed by the soldier, went across to the gate, passed through it, and spoke to the hunter, whom he knew, and obtained from him a more particular account of the wounded man's condition.

"'Shot in the breast and knocked in the head! Still breathing, but unconscious!' Yes, we must take the stretcher and bring him into the fort, if he be still living

when we reach the hut," said the surgeon, in answer to Longman's hurried account.

And then he issued his orders.

And soon a little procession—headed by the surgeon and the hunter, who were followed by four privates bearing a stretcher by its four handles—issued from the gate of the fort, and took the way across the plain and down the wooded steep, through the narrow vale and over the shallow stream, to Longman's.

In twenty minutes they reached and entered the hut.

The candles were still burning above the bed of skins on which lay the wounded, unconscious and scarcely breathing man.

The men lowered their voices and softened their footsteps as they entered what seemed to be the presence of death.

"Stand further off. Let me have room," said the surgeon, as he approached the rude pallet and knelt beside the patient.

"More light, Longman," he said at length.

The hunter lighted two more candles and stood holding them over the pallet.

The surgeon went on with his examination.

"Yes, we must take him to the fort," he said.

And preparation for the transportation was immediately made.

Soon poor Ran was laid upon the stretcher, which was constructed on the simplest plan, being only a narrow breadth of canvas tacked to two long poles, the ends of which formed four handles for the convenience of lifting and carrying.

The four soldiers took hold, and, preceded by the surgeon, set out for the fort.

In consideration of their wounded charge, they walked very slowly and carefully, so that it was late when they reached the fort.

The surgeon, having the countersign, found no difficulty in entering with his companions.

The wounded man was borne at once to the hospital, and laid upon a prepared table, where the doctor, with the help of the men, washed and dressed the wounds and changed the clothes of the stranger, and finally laid him on a clean, comfortable bed.

It was now near day, and the doctor only waited for light to perform a delicate operation.

He sat by the unconscious man, giving him such treatment as his medical science and experience suggested, until the sun arose and flooded the room with light.

Then he sent for a soldier who made a little money beyond his military pay by acting as the fort barber.

When this functionary entered the room the surgeon directed him to shave the head of the patient very carefully and closely.

Without the least surprise or hesitation the barber prepared to obey. He was not unfrequently called upon to exercise his vocation under the circumstances. Broken heads were not scarce in that time and place.

First, the beautiful, silky, black locks of the wounded boy fell under the shears of the barber, and then the bluish stubble was reaped by his razor, and finally a small fracture of the skull, with an indentation, was discovered.

Here the barber gave place to the surgeon, who, with his delicate instrument, raised the small bit of bone that pressed upon the brain of the patient.

And now a wonderful, but quite authentic and not unparalleled, circumstance occurred.

Ray Hay opened his dark eyes, and opened his lips as well, and took up the refrain of his song, just where Gentleman Geff's bullet had cut it short. He sang, though in a weak and quavering voice:

" 'We never saw by day!
And darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day!' "

And having finished his refrain he fainted quite away.

"I never yet seen nor heern anything like that in all my experience of cracked skulls," said the barber.

The doctor did not reply. He was engaged in applying restoratives to recover his patient. As soon as he had succeeded in this he administered a little concentrated nourishment and stimulants.

And then, as he could do no more for the time being, he thought of the minor duty of searching the stranger's clothing for some clew to his identity.

So he took up poor Ran's coarse coat, vest and trousers, and searched them carefully all through. But evidently the pockets had been rifled, for there was nothing—absolutely nothing—not even a pipe, or a quid of tobacco to be found.

"The man has been robbed, as well as half murdered."

"We must question Longman more closely to-morrow, and I hope also that this poor fellow, if he should recover, will be able to give us some clew to his assailant," said the surgeon.

Very soon after reveille Longman came to the fort to inquire after the stranger.

He was permited to come up to the hospital.

The surgeon, who had breakfasted, met him and freely answered all his questions.

"You see, I feel almost responsible for the poor fellow, as he rolled down the steep anl stopped at my very door. Will he get over it?" the hunter asked.

"I don't know," replied the surgeon.

"Have you cut out the bullet, sir?"

"No, for the bullet cut out itself, passing entirely through the chest from back to front and so out."

"A very dangerous wound, doctor?"

"I think so."

"And his head?"

"Also very badly hurt."

"Poor little fellow!" said Hercules, in a pitying tone. "Poor little fellow. Well, doctor, if I can help him in any way, my time, tin and labor are at his service, and you know where to find me when wanted, doctor."

"Thank you, Mr. Longman. You are very kind."

"Not a bit! And you'll do it?"

"Do what, my friend?"

"Send for yours to command, Samson Longman, if wanted."

"Assuredly I will," replied the surgeon.

"Thanky, doctor! Good-morning, sir," and the hunter left the fort.

The colonel's wife was a very benevolent little lady. No one could look on her without seeing that. She was a fair, rosy, plump, little woman, with a round face, soft, brown eyes and wavy brown hair. She always dressed plainly in

delicate colors; for summer—pink, buff, or gray; and warm colors for winter—crimson, cardinal or maroon. She always took a great interest in the sick or wounded in the little hospital, especially as there was never more than one patient there at a time, and seldom even one.

Very soon after the hunter had departed, Mrs. Moseley made her appearance with interested inquiries after the condition of the injured man.

"He seems to be a mere boy, dear madam," said the surgeon, as he drew forward the only easy-chair in his office for the accommodation of the lady, "and we have no clew to his identity. The hand that drew the trigger on him also rifled his pockets."

"Will he recover, poor lad?"

"It is very doubtful."

"Please tell me all you know about it," said Mrs. Moseley.

The surgeon told the story he had heard from the hunter. And he then added:

"The wound in his head is the most serious one, and it was not received, as Longman supposed, in the fall down the steep, for that fall was continually broken by the branches of the trees, so that a few scratches were the most serious consequences, but the wound was received in this manner: The instant he was shot through the chest he must have fallen forward and struck his head on the edge of a piece of rock."

"Can I see the poor youth?" inquired the lady.

"Certainly," said the surgeon, and he led the way to another room and to the cot on which the wounded man lay asleep.

The lady gazed compassionately on the pale, dark, handsome face, with its jet black eyebrows, long black eyelashes, lying flat upon the cheeks, and curling black mustache upon the short upper lip.

"Poor fellow!" sighed the colonel's wife. "Why, he is a beautiful boy! And—his face seems familiar to me, somehow!"

"Do you think, madam, that you have ever seen him before?" inquired the surgeon.

"I—don't—know. His face pains and puzzles me," she said, reflectively, and putting her hand to her forehead as if to aid memory.

"Well?" inquired the doctor, with a smile.

"Oh! I know now the face that this boy reminds me of. It is that of Maria Annunciatta della Rosa, whom I used to know in San Francisco, years ago. I was her bridesmaid when she married Prof. Cuthbert Hay, who was professor of English in the Spanish Academy of St. Aloysius. They had one child—a son. I have not seen him since he was six years old. There was a contagious fever in the city at that time, and Maria and her father, Don Jose, died of it. Mr. Hay resigned his professorship and left the city with his child. I have not seen or heard of either of them since. The boy, if alive, would be about the age of this youth."

"But do you think——"

"I say I do not know. This young man's face is as much like that of my friend, Maria della Rosa's, as a masculine face can possibly be like a feminine one; and it is, moreover, as much like old Don Jose's as a youth's face can be like a patriarch's."

"But, my dear madam, such likenesses are often accidental," said the surgeon.

"Not, I think, when there are such peculiar lines of beauty and distinction in the features. Look at the fine curve of the eyebrows and corners of the eyes, and observe the turn of the lips and the chin. Oh, no, sir; here is the facial angle of the old Castilian nobles."

"And you really imagine——"

"Stop! I remember now! I can settle this in one moment," she said, and she drew the left hand of the injured man from under the coverlet and examined it.

"Well?" inquired the doctor, with a smile.

"It is as I thought. This young man is Randolph Hay, the son of my old friend," said the lady.

"How do you identify him?" inquired the surgeon.

"By this," replied the lady, holding up the hand of the injured man. "Do you perceive that the little finger of the left hand is but the germ or rudiment of a finger? It is a slight deformity with which he was born, and which need not be seen when he chose to hide it by turning or half closing his hand."

"I see. But are you sure?"

"Why, of course—absolutely sure. How could I possibly be mistaken in a matter of this kind?"

"Not easily, of course."

"Oh! I do hope he will live! I felt an interest in the poor boy from the first moment I heard of his condition. But, of course, I feel a much deeper interest in him now. "Oh, doctor! can he possibly live?" anxiously inquired the lady.

"He may, madam; but it is not likely that he will."

"Do you think he will recover his senses?"

"I hope so," replied the surgeon, evasively.

"If he should, will you send for me? I should like to speak with him. Will you?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Moseley."

"And if he should be able to take any nourishment, will you let me know? And I will have it prepared according to your directions, and under my own eye."

"Thank you, Mrs. Moseley. I will avail myself of your kind offer."

"Poor boy!" said the lady, and with one parting gaze at the patient's face she turned, bowed to the doctor and left the room.

CHAPTER XII

WARNED BY A DREAM

On the morning when Ran Hay, in company with Gentleman Geff, left Grizzly to tramp all the way to San Francisco, Mike and Judy stood watching the pair until they were out of sight.

Then Mike walked off to find another partner, in the camp that was just beginning to wake up to the day's business.

And Judy went inside of her cabin, sat down on the floor, threw her apron over her head and began to weep and wail, keeping time by see-sawing her body back and forth. She kept up this lamentation until some one entered the cabin. Then she started up, and saw standing before her Ben Brown, the saloon keeper, with a bundle of linen in his hand.

"Well, Miss Judy, I have brought the washing. Could you have it done by to-night?" he inquired, sitting down on

one of the stools and putting his burden on the floor before him.

"Sure and I can, Mr. Brown, and what would be to hinder me?" she answered, smartly, to hide her grief.

"Nothing as I know on, unless it would be fretting after young Ran Hay."

"And is it Misther Hay ye're spakin' av? And what would ail me to fret afther him, sure, when he's gone away to walk intil a grand fortin?" demanded Judy, tossing her handsome little head.

"Oh, nothing; only you might niver see him again, that's all."

"Don't you throuble yerself about that, Misther Brown. And av ye want the clothes home by night I'd a dale bether be getting a pot of wather over the fire to het than standing talking nonsense," said Judy, beginning to bustle about in search of her pail.

Ben Brown laughed and left the cabin, flinging this shaft behind him:

"Ah, well, Miss Judy, it's a smart, industrious gal ye are, let alone a handsome one; and it's a good wife ye'll make some fine fellow one of these days. And happy the man that will get you!"

Judy turned to fire away some repartee, but her neighbor was gone.

Judy did not relapse again into grief. She betook herself to hard work, sorrow's best earthly antidote.

First she fetched water from the stream and filled a large pot which she had hung over the fire in the open chimney, and while the water was heating she washed up the breakfast dishes and cleared up the table that had been left standing after Ran Hay's departure.

Then she washed out Ben Brown's clothes and hung them on the line to dry; emptied and turned up her tubs and pots in the sun on the outside of the cabin.

Then when she had "tidied up" her own home she went into Ran Hay's deserted hut.

Here again, at the sight of the poor boy's little, familiar properties, her spirits gave way and she sat down on the floor, threw her apron over her head and lifted up her voice in lamentations. Now no one interrupted her, and she sat there weeping and wailing and swaying her body to and fro,

until the paroxysm of grief exhausted itself. Then, amid a few subsiding sobs and sighs, she began to wipe her face with her apron. While so engaged she felt a soft touch on her naked arm and heard a piteous whine.

She dropped her apron before her face and saw beside her poor Ran Hay's black hound, "Tippicanoo," or "Tip," as he was familiarly called.

Judy threw her arms around the dog and hugged him to her bosom, crying over him:

"Oh, my poor Tip! Oh, my dear Ran's poor Tip! Your master's gone, Tip! He's gone far away. And I, like the brute baste that I am, forgot to give you your breakfast, so I did! Come, Tip! Come home wid me, darlint, and I'll feed ye like the King av Agypt's dog. And whin meself laves the place ye'll not be left behind, Tip," she said; and she called the hound after her, returned to her own cabin and gave him all that was left of the breakfast.

Then she went back to Ran Hay's hut and put everything in order.

Next came her task of sprinkling down and rolling up the clothes she had washed in the morning. And while they were "giving" she put her irons to heat, and also put on the pot for a boiled dinner for Mike.

While the bacon and cabbage and potatoes were cooking, Judy spread her board and began her ironing. She worked on for two or three hours, and to keep up her spirits she sang a favorite song in a clear, elastic voice:

" 'Sing at your work, 'twill lighten
The labors of the day!
Sing at your work, 'twill brighten
The darkness of the way!
Sing at your work, though sorrow
Its lengthened shade should cast;
Joy cometh with the morrow,
And soon the night is past' "

By the time the last shirt was ironed Mike came in to his dinner, hungry and happy.

Judy folded up her ironing blanket, and set the table, and dished up the dinner.

Mike talked, laughed and joked during the whole meal.

Judy fed Ran's hound, that sat beside her all the time. She dared not trust herself to speak of her absent lover; but she listened attentively while Mike conjectured just about where he was at that present time, and where he would be likely to be at nightfall.

"Reckon he is in the long forest now, and about two-thirds through it. Reckon he'll be getting nigh Table Woods by dark."

"Where will he sleep?" Judy ventured to ask.

"The thick timber in Table Woods is a good place to camp on sich a night as this promises to be. Come, girleen, don't be looking so sarious. Sure it's a blissid letter you'll be getting in a day or two, and then he'll be back in a jiffy. You'll never be doubting him, Judy?"

"Oh, niver! niver! I'd as soon be doubting one av the hooly saints!" said Judy, with all her heart in her tone.

"Well, thin, it's brave and merry ye ought to be while waiting for him. It's not so long ye'll have to wait. It isn't as if it was a say v'yage he had gone."

"Oh! it's all right I'll be to-morrow, Mike. The fuss day's the wuss day, ye know. And sure I have still got a hape av wurruk to do to bring me through it," said Judy, cheerfully.

"Sure, and it's all right ye are now, Judy. And I'll be going back to me shaft," said Mike, rising after a hearty meal.

"And it is a pard ye have found, Mike?" inquired Judy.

"Yes, sure, a stranger that tramped into the camp this morning. Sez his name's Jerry Noddin, from Wild Cat. Don't know much about him, but 'no betther company, wilcome thrumpery.' He's at Ben Brown's at the prisint spaking, but I reckon he will take Ran's hut. Well, thin, good-day till I see ye again, Judy," said Mike, as he left the cabin to return to his shaft.

Judy washed up her dishes, cleared up her cabin, and sat down to knit.

Ran's hound stretched himself at her feet.

The girl hummed a favorite Irish melody as she worked.

The afternoon passed; the sun set.

"I wonder where me boy is at this prisint," said Judy to herself, as she rolled up her knitting, putting it away, took her pail and went out to get water.

At the door she met Ben Brown.

"If ye've come for the clothes, they're all riddy for ye, pinned up in a towel on the table inside," she said.

"Thanky, Miss Judy. I'll find 'em," said Ben, and he went in and brought out the bundle.

Judy filled her pail at the stream that flowed through the little vale, and then re-entered the house, mended the fire, filled the kettle and hung it over the blaze. Then she cut and fried bacon, mixed and baked batter cakes, covered them all up on the hot plates before the fire, and then made the tea and set it to draw, and set the table for supper.

Mike came in while she was arranging the cups and saucers.

"And where d'ye think me boy is the night, Mike?" she inquired.

"Going through Table Woods, I reckon," replied the brother, dropping down on the three-legged stool and beginning to pull off his heavy boots.

"Oh, wirra! wirra! if it was only the second sight I was gifted with to see him the night!" sighed Judy.

"I wouldn't like to be afther seeing him that way. It would be too unnatooral and ghistly," replied Mike.

It would almost seem, by what followed, that Judy's heart's prayer had been heard and answered.

Now she set the supper on the table, and told Mike to draw up his stool.

The brother, and the sister, too, being young and healthy, ate a hearty meal, and having worked hard all day, became sleepy soon afterward.

Judy cleared away the table.

Mike covered up the fire.

Then both retired to bed.

Judy's bunk was curtained off from the rest of the room by a coarse blanket.

She knelt behind this, knelt down beside her rude bed and said her evening prayers, and at the end of her usual ritual she invoked the Virgin, and all the saints, to watch over and protect her dear boy on his long journey, and to bring him back safe to her as soon as possible.

Then she prepared for bed—a very slight preparation—only the laying off of her outer dress, and getting under the patchwork quilt. Judy, young, healthy and tired, fell into

a deep sleep—which did not last long, however. She soon started up.

Mike was snoring loudly, and dreaming blissfully of blocks and blocks of shining yellow gold as big as bowlders, all his own, when he was roughly shaken, and awakened.

"Hooly Moses! Phwat's the matther?" he cried, starting up and preparing for defense. "Is it ye'self, Noddin, ye thafe of the wurruld?" he demanded; for it was so dark he could not see his assailant, who had withdrawn as soon as the sleeper was awakened.

"No, Mike, ava. It's me—Judy. Oh! I'm so unhappy! Wait, Mike, till I slip on me frock and light a candle," answered Judy's voice from the gloom.

"Is it ailing ye are, girleen, or is it the night witch has gripped ye?" demanded the brother, sitting on the side of his bunk and drawing on his trousers.

"I don't know," moaned Judy, as she drew a match and lighted a candle, revealing brother and sister hastily clothed; the brother looking anxious and perplexed, the sister pale, trembling and terrified.

"Now, thin, what is the matther, Judy? What ivir has frightened ye, honey?" he inquired, staring at her.

"Oh! oh! Mike! I have had sich a dhrame, or a visitation, I dinno which," Judy wailed.

"'A dhrame or a visitation!' Is it—is it—was it—a banshee?"

"Oh, Mike! I dinno," she sobbed, and she sat down on the floor, dropped her face into her hands, and began to rock herself to and fro.

"Now what the divil ails the gal, annyhow?" said her brother, going and stooping over her.

"Oh, Mike, whativir will I do?" she sobbed.

"Now be the divil's granny, how will I tell ye, unless I know phwat the matter is?"

"Oh, Mike! it was the dhrame, or the visitation!"

"Phwat dhrame, sure?"

"It couldn't hiv bin a dhrame, neither. It was too rale. It was a visitation."

"Hooly Mither! Can't ye till me what it was, thin?"

"Oh, wirra, wirra! Oh, me poor boy! me poor Ran!" sobbed Judy, swaying herself back and forth.

"It's dhraming ye are! thit's all aboot it!"

"Oh, no, Mike! And I must be up and doing."

"Up and doing in the middle of the night?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Oh, Mike, I was fast asleep—sound asleep, whin something, I don't know what, woke me up, and, stid o' being here in the house wid you, I were in a deep wood; and it was so thick that even the stars in the sky couldn't shine down through it. But, somehow, I could see without light. And there—— Oh, Mike! Oh, Mike! Oh, Mike!"

"For Moses' sake, Judy, stop howling and till me phwat ye seen!"

"Oh, me poor boy! Oh, me poor Ran! Laying there, face down, in his own blood, dead, dead, dead!" wailed Judy, rocking herself to and fro.

"Ah, sure, it was just nothing but a dhrame; and it's dhraming yit, ye are! Take a sup at the craychur, girrul, and it will wake ye up," said Mike, going off to the rough corner shelves and bringing out a black bottle. He drew the cork, and put the mouth to Judy's lips.

She swallowed a mouthful, strangled, spluttered, coughed, got angry and recovered herself.

"Take the divilish truck away, Mike. How ivir could ye do sich a trick on me? Sure, the Injuns call it the right name. It's fire-wather, so it is. And it's burned me throat to a blister!" she cried.

"Eh, well! But it's waked ye up, Judy! Ye're betther! And now ye'll own it was all a dhrame," chuckled Mike, as he replaced the bottle.

"Dhrame or no, you and I must go and follow Ran's trail to-morrow to see what has become of him," replied Judy.

"The divil ye say! Do ye know what ye're talking about, Judy?"

"Ay, I do. And you and meself will follow me poor boy's trail till we find him, even if it takes us all the way to 'Frisco," firmly replied the girl.

"Hooly Sint Pater! what a wake head she's got, for that little dhrap o' the craychur as wint down her throat to have overkim her in this way! Why, I've med the girrul dhrunk," said poor Mike, within himself, as he stared in blank consternation at his sister.

When he recovered himself, he was too wise to oppose her, but said, in a diplomatic and conciliatory tone:

"All right, Judy; we'll talk about that to-morrow. We'd betther go to bed now, for I'm dead for the slape."

'You may go to bed if you like, Mike. But, as for meself, I couldn't close me eyes to-night," said Judy.

"That's bad; but, aven so, ye can lay yerself down and rist. Sure, ye'll nade it, if ye mane to tramp to 'Frisco to-morrow," said Mike, cunningly.

"And I do mane," said Judy, as she blew out the candle, and went and threw herself down on the outside of her bunk, closely followed by Ran's hound, who laid himself on the floor beside it.

Judy slept no more that night, but lay praying to all the saints for the safety of her boy's body and soul.

With the earliest dawn of day she arose, lighted a candle, kindled a fire, brought water from the stream, and began to get breakfast and to set the table, followed, in and out, everywhere, by Ran's hound.

Mike slept through all this. He slept later than usual, on account of having been disturbed during the night. He slept until Judy woke him up to come to breakfast.

Mike made his primitive toilet by washing his face and hands, and then sat down to the table. Then Judy opened on him:

"We must start in half an hour, Mike."

"Start where?"

"On me poor Ran's trail, to be sure."

"Och, bother! Are ye afther that same the morning? Sure, Judy, it was only a bad dhrame ye had that disturbed yer rest. And it was only the dhrap o' the craychur I poured down yer throat as got into yer head and made ye talk av the trail," said the brother, uneasily.

"Mike," replied the girl, gravely and firmly, "we must go. Aven if me poor Ran was only an ekkwentance av our own, and not going to be your brother, we ought to go and see to him, after sich a dhrame. And we must go."

"Now, look a-here, Judy! I'd do onything in life fer ye as was raisonable, and a good dale more besides; but this here is rank foolishness, and it can't be done—there!"

Judy had known her brother long enough to know that when he had said he would not do this or that, he was stubborn as a mule. Yet knowing this, she still tried des-

perately to persuade him to follow Ran's trail. But all in vain, as she might have known it would be.

"I've got to go to the shaft. I can't trust that new pard o' mine till I know him betther. So I shan't be home till dark, ye mind. Good-day till ye, Jude. Don't think harred av me, girrul, for not going on a wild-goose chase," said the brother, as he took his old felt hat from its peg and walked out of the cabin.

Judy watched him out of sight, and then—she lost no more time. She hastily piled the fragments of the breakfast on a tin plate, called the hound, and placed it outside the door for his meal. She did not stop to clear the table.

She threw a shawl over her head, and ran over to Ben Brown's cabin—the largest in the camp, because it included a saloon.

Judy went in, and found Ben behind the bar.

"Ah! good-morning, Miss Judy. It's the change for the washing—here it is," said Brown, handing over the amount.

"Thanky," said Judy, as she put the money in her pocket. "But it was not that I came for; I niver dunned ye yit, Misther Brown."

"No, no more you never. But when money's earned it's owed. What can I do for you, Miss Judy?"

"Oh, Misther Brown, will ye lind me the loan av a bit av writing paper and pin and ink?"

"Of course, Miss Judy," said Ben, as he handed down from a rude desk a half quire of coarse paper, a little black bottle of ink and a rusty steel pen.

"Thanky, Misther Brown," said Judy, drawing them toward her.

"And I can guess who the letter's for," added Ben.

"Sure, and I don't think you can, Misther Brown, sir. And, more-an-over, it's no letther, but a note; and will you lave me write it here on yer counther? It will save carrying the articles to me cabin an' bringing av 'em back," said the girl.

"With the greatest pleasure in life, Miss Judy," promptly replied the gallant Ben.

Judy went to the rear of the counter, which ran from front to back on the left side of the room, cleared a little place, and while man after man came in, took his morning

drink, cracked a joke with the bartender and went out again without so much as speaking to Judy, whom all respected, and who seemed absorbed in her task, the girl wrote the following note to her brother.

She wrote slowly and with difficulty, for though she had been taught to read and write by the Sisters of the Holy Maternity, yet she had been entirely out of practice a long time; added to which, her pen, ink and paper were of the poorest description.

Nevertheless, she achieved this:

"DEER MIKE:—Ime sorry to sa yele have to kuk yer owne males for the prisint. I must go on me pore bouy's trale to se whats bekum av him donte think harrd av me Mike i cante helpe it and i take the hownde to help me to finde me pore ran. your luving cyster till deth

"JUDY MAN."

She folded this note, gave back the stationery to the barkeeper, thanked him again, and walked out of the saloon.

The camp was almost deserted. The men were all out at their shafts, and there were but two more women besides Judy at Grizzly, and these were out of sight when the girl passed through to her cabin. She found the dog at the door, at work on the last bones of his breakfast.

He left them and followed her into the house.

She took the note that she had written and stuck it with a pin just above the nail where Mike always hung his hat. There she knew he would be sure to find it when he should return at night.

"It would have been no use, my telling Mike beforehand. He nivir would hev let me go. He could hev privinted me by force and vilince. And I hev to go and find me boy, afther being warned in a dhrame," she said, talking to herself, as was the habit of her lonely life, while she went on with her preparations.

She took down the lantern and filled the lamp inside with oil. And then she took the money that she had that morning received for her washing, and put it on the shelf from which she had taken the lantern, muttering to herself:

"I'm not that sure and sartain as the craychur isn't just as much me own as hissen, and sure, I nade it more if I'm

to be overtook in the night in the woods. But, to be on the safe side from the sin and shame av staling, I'll jist lave the price av it here."

Then she tied up a little parcel of food for herself and the dog, put a tin box of matches in her pocket, tied a straw hat over her head, wrapped a plaid shawl around her shoulders, called the hound to follow her, and left the cabin, passed through the deserted camp, and entered the forest.

As its shades were about to inclose her she glanced up at the sun, which was her only timepiece.

"About eight av the clock. I'll have a tin or ilivin hours' start before Mike finds out I'm gone. And thin I shall have as minny hours av daylight itself as well. Come, Tip, darlint doggie. We's going to find yer masther, hinny."

Then she went into the thick forest.

No man of that camp, not even when traveling in company with other men, would have ventured to traverse that route without being "armed to the teeth," for there was deadly danger from ravenous wild beasts, from savage Indians, and from much more savage border ruffians.

Yet this young girl, innocent, ignorant and courageous, inspired by an honest affection, and warned, as she imagined, by a dream, with no other defense or protection than her dog and her lantern, entered a howling wilderness, more deadly perilous to her than could have been the tiger-haunted jungles of India.

CHAPTER XIII

JUDY'S JOURNEY

Did Judy know the risk she ran in starting on her journey through the wilderness, with no guide or guard but her lantern and her dog?

If she knew, she did not stop to think of it. Her only care was to find Ran.

She entered the dark wood fearlessly. It closed behind, so that she soon found herself in a solitude as profound as that of the primeval forest never trodden by the foot of man. Above and around her was an interminable sea of

foliage, shutting out the sky above and the way before her. Under her feet the trail was almost invisible. It was, indeed, traversed only about once a week by the packman, who made the sole communication between the mining camp and the distant city.

The dog, Tip, snuffing along with his nose to the ground, led the way.

On this fine spring morning the green wilderness was all alive with animal as well as with vegetable life—jubilant with the songs of birds, and redolent of the perfume of leaves and flowers.

Yet Judy, young, healthy and natural as she was. noticed none of these charms of the forest walk.

Her only thought was to get on beyond pursuit and to find Ran.

She remembered that her brother had left their cabin that morning to go to the shaft for the whole day, yet she feared lest some chance might bring him back to the hut, to discover her flight, and to start in pursuit; so she was terribly anxious to go on as fast as she could. She thought, if she should hear footsteps behind her, what she should do. She resolved that in such a case she should leave the trail, plunge into the thicket, calling the dog after her, and hide herself in its deepest recesses.

Besides this, she thought of her dream in which she had seen Ran lying wounded and bleeding in the wilderness. That dream picture had impressed itself so distinctly upon her memory that she could see every feature of it by only closing her eyes.

"He's not dead! Oh, he's not dead!" she cried, with a sharp heart-pang at the thought of the possibility. "If he had been, what would ha' been the use of the dhrame itself but to mock a poor gurrl? No, he's not dead, but hurrt—hurrt, and warnts meself to luke afther him. So the dhrame was given to warrn me. And so I must make haste. Oh, I must make haste, and resky me poor bhoy!" She sped on.

Thus, at the very outset of her long journey, she made the mistake of the inexperienced. She walked much too fast, so every hour she grew more weary, began to drag herself along more slowly, stopped oftener to recover

breath, and at last, about noon, she sank down exhausted on the side of the trail.

The dog came and licked her face, and in dog language asked her what was the matter, and what he could do for her. Should he kill a bird or a squirrel, and bring it to her? Was there anything he could bark at? Or anything he could bite? If she would only tell him, he would do whatever she willed, at the risk of his own life, or the sacrifice of anybody else's, for he loved her only next best to his master.

Judy understood and believed him, and told him so with many caresses from her hands, while she lay and rested her tired back and limbs on the ground and against the trunk of a great tree.

Presently she opened her lunch basket, and took from it a meaty bone, which she gave to Tip. Then she took out a bottle of cold tea, uncorked it, and put it to her lips. When she had drunk the tea, and eaten a large piece of bread and another of bacon, she felt refreshed. She gave Tip more food, and when he had consumed it he went snuffing into the thicket on the opposite side of the trail in search of water, and found it in a little brooklet running parallel with their path. Here he drank his fill, and then came back and told his mistress that he was at her orders and quite ready to attend her.

But Judy did not stir, and Tip, who was also tired, lay down at her feet, coiled himself up, and went to sleep.

The birds in the trees overhead hopped down on the lower branches, and turning their little heads sideways, peered at her curiously with their bright eyes.

Hares and squirrels, and other small quadrupeds of the wilderness, came to the edge of the thicket on both sides of the trail and peeped at the intrusive stranger, and then scudded away as fast as they could run; but only to come back, peep again, and again scud away.

Judy watched them with some interest and amusement, but without moving or speaking, lest she should frighten them.

There was a wild rose growing in the thicket, within her reach. The first rose of the season had burst into bloom.

Judy stretched out her hand to take it, but then withdrew it; she had not the heart to pluck the rose. A strange

tenderness toward living things led Judy to spare flowers as she spared her young chickens.

But her movement effectually frightened her visitors; the little quadrupeds fled to the innermost recesses of the thicket, and the birds flew up to the highest branches of the trees. And neither bird nor quadruped came back.

In spite of the anxiety that was gnawing at the bottom of her heart, Judy laughed, for she was young, sympathetic and impressible, and she appreciated the quaint terror of the little creatures.

"Come, Tip," she said, rising, and lifting her lantern and her basket, "we must be going, me darlint!"

Tip arose, slowly stretched himself, and declared that he was quite ready.

"We are going to hunt your masther, Tip," she continued, talking to the dog from the love of talking, and for lack of any human hearer.

Tip said that he was happy to go wherever she should lead, or—wags to that effect.

Surprised, however, that he showed no more enthusiasm, Judy changed her words, and said:

"We are going afther Ran, Tip—Ran!"

Ah! now, indeed, there was zeal worth seeing. Tip did not know who master was, for no one called his owner by that title, but the name of Ran was a dear, familiar sound, and Tip knew who that was. With many joyous barks and bounds, he jumped around his companion, and then ran on before her.

All the afternoon they walked through the thick forest.

No wild beast, savage Indian or border ruffian crossed her sylvan path. Yet, as the afternoon waned and evening drew near, she began to feel afraid in the deep woods. She knew that at night birds of prey and beasts of prey, biped and quadruped, would come out of their nests and lairs, "seeking whom they might devour." She was in dread of them, not only of men and wolves, but of hawks and vultures. She began to pray to the Holy Virgin, and to all the blessed saints, to protect her on her lonely way, and bring her safely to the side of her lover.

As it grew dark, she began to feel very weary. Taught by experience, she resolved to stop walking before she

should drop down, as she did at noon, and perhaps, also, in some very dangerous place.

She lighted her lantern, and looked about for some convenient tree, with some low, strong fork, into which she might secure herself by means of her shawl, and rest in safety; or, what would be better still, some tree among the enormous fauna of that region, with a hollow large enough to shelter her, and where she could, indeed, lie hidden and go to sleep in safety.

But she walked on and on without finding a resting place.

Presently she heard a sound that seemed to freeze her blood. It was the softest, clearest, most plaintive and most musical sound—except the song of birds—that the forest could produce. And yet it was one of the most terrific sounds that could have startled the ears of the lonely traveler.

It was the cry of a pack of wolves on blood scent.

Judy dropped by the side of the sylvan road, and covered her face with her hands, invoking all the heavenly powers to help her.

Tip bristled and growled, standing guard over her.

The melodious cry came nearer.

"St. Mary and all the holy virgins save me!" prayed the shuddering girl, keeping her eyes covered lest she should see the coming horrible death.

And nearer.

"St. Stephen and all the holy martyrs pray for me!"

And nearer still. And now, with the melodious cry, could be heard the light trampling of many small feet, sounding like the heavy fall of raindrops on leaves.

"St. Michael and all the holy angels pray for me!" cried Judy, falling on the ground, face downward.

She was saying the prayers for a departing spirit.

The sound of the baying and trampling continued, but came no nearer.

Judy, face on the ground, prayed on.

The sounds seemed to be dying away.

The dog came and licked her face, assuring her that the peril was past.

The sounds had entirely died away.

Judy lifted her head from the ground and sat up and listened.

There was silence in the woods.

Still, Judy was too much overcome to resume her way immediately.

The pack of wolves had passed along far out of hearing. It was not her blood they wanted. She knew that now, yet she could not quickly recover her composure.

The faithful dog stood by her, licked her hand and fawned on her.

She patted his shaggy head, and laid her face against his cheek, and talked to him as to a human being:

"It wasn't oursilves they were afther to ate, the saints be praised! Och, darlint Tip, it's a big scare we have got! And sure I know if the divils had come, it is yersilf would have died in my defince. Wouldn't ye now, doggie?" she asked, tenderly caressing him.

And Tip, looking in the direction whence the sounds had died away, uttered a low, deep, thunderous growl to the effect that he would—yes, a thousand deaths.

At last she got up and resumed her walk, carrying her basket on her left arm and her lighted lantern in her right hand, followed instead of being preceded by the dog.

Not many steps had she walked when she came upon the yawning cavern of a huge hollow tree, with its opening just high enough for her to climb easily into.

"Och! sure here it is, Tip, and meself knew it would come. And now we can sit down a minnit on the outside and ate our supper, for I darn't take the time to do it before; and now meself is as hungry as a hunther," she said.

And she hung her lantern on the branch of a bush near by, and then sat down and opened her basket.

She divided the food with the dog, giving him a bone covered with meat, and taking a little slice of cheese and two large slices of bread for herself, and leaving half a dozen biscuits for breakfast the next morning. She drank the remainder of the cold tea from the bottle, and then replaced the latter carefully in the basket, for an empty bottle cannot be thrown away, in the backwoods, as recklessly as it is here.

Finally she held her lantern down into the hollow of the tree to see if there were any noxious reptiles in it. She

saw none; the cavity looked clean and smelt sweet. She even broke off a little branch, stripped it and stirred it about in the hollow to see if she could start any insects; but there were none.

"It's clane and dacent as a baby's crib in the Fondlin'," she said, as she hung her lantern up above the hole, rolled herself up in her shawl and got into the cavity. When she had turned about until she had found a comfortable position and was sure of it she raised her head and looked out.

The dog was standing with his head raised to hers, looking at her in doubt and anxiety.

"It's all right, Tip," she said. "Lay doon there and go to slape! Lay doon, Tip, darlint!"

The dog obediently stretched himself at the foot of the tree.

Judy then drew in her head, settled herself comfortably in her seat, took her rosary from her pocket and began her evening devotions.

Overcome by the unusual fatigue of the day, she fell fast asleep in the midst of them, and dropped her beads.

She did not stir for ten hours; she slept a dreamless sleep.

When at length she awoke the sun was high, and his light, filtered through thousands of fresh green leaves, was reviving and delightful.

Judy had lost the connection of her consciousness. She did not know where she was, or how she came there; she had a vague fear that she had been buried—alive. She started, and was ready to scream, when the front paws and the head of the big black dog appeared at the opening, and the facts of the position flashed at once upon her.

"Oh! the good, fethful craychur thet ye be! Ye've tuk care av me the whole night, so ye have, and nivir stirred nor wuk me until I wuk meself. Good Tip! Good doggie!" she said, putting out her hand to fondle him.

Then Judy tried to get out of her nest, but found it harder than to get in.

"Sure it's like a clam in a shell, or a young chicken in an egg, I fale. Sure I've harrdly room to turn round meself. It's wedged in I am," she said, as she struggled to free herself from her bondage.

"And now it's like an ould woman with the rheumatiz I

fale, with me legs as stiff as sticks," she complained, as she at last succeeded in climbing out of the hollow tree, and tried to stretch her limbs.

She heard the soft gurgle of water running near by.

"Ah! bliss it! and I so thirsty, and you, too, doggie," she said, as she set off to find the stream.

It was deep in the thicket on the other side of the trail; a bright little brook, catching every spark of the sun's light that drifted down through the roof of foliage.

Judy stooped and curved her doubled hands into a cup, and drank her fill.

Tip had followed her, and now he unceremoniously dipped his mouth into the stream and drank great draughts of the water very noisily.

Then Judy washed her face, and wiped it on her handkerchief.

Finally she went back to the hollow tree, opened her basket and divided the whole of its remaining contents with Tip—three biscuits for Tip, and three for herself.

"Now, doggie," she said, when they had finished their repast; "if we don't come to somewhere before noon it's hungry we'll be; if we don't come to somewhere before night it's a'most starved we'll be. I fale like Lisabeth in the Elzize of Sibeery, or like little Red Ridinghood and the wolf; but most like the Babes in the Woods Ay! that's me and you, doggie—babes in the woods—and if we starve to death, sure the two av us will lay down togither and die on the ground, and the little birds will come and kiver us all over with the grane laives. But come along, Tip!"

She resumed her journey, followed by the dog.

They walked on sturdily through the forest, that at every mile became a deeper and still deeper wilderness.

At noon both girl and dog were weary, hungry and thirsty.

She sat down to rest, and he lay down at her feet; but they had no food, and found no water.

In fifteen minutes she arose and recommenced her walk, with a dragging, faltering step, the dog following slowly behind her. They walked on wearily for a mile or two further.

"We must go until we come to somewheres, Tip, for if we

don't come to somewheres it's stharved we'll be, and buried by the robins before we find Ran."

The dog gave a weak but joyful bark at the sound of his master's name.

Suddenly, with a furious bark, he shot past his mistress and threw himself upon a hunter who was advancing from the opposite direction, but was hidden from Judy's sight by the thickness of the meeting foliage from each side of the road.

The dog had caught him by the furry collar of his buck-skin coat, and held him fast.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HUNTER

"JEE-HOSS-A-PHAT, king of the Jews! Call your dog off, young 'oman, or I'll have to kill him!" exclaimed the man, as he caught sight of Judy's girlish face and red shawl.

"Oh! plaise, plaise, don't hurt him, sir! Sure he'll nivir harrum you—not laist I bid him. Come here, Tip—come here, sir!" cried Judy, in a spasm of terror, as she rushed to the rescue not of the man, but of the dog.

Tip, as docile and obedient as he was brave and ferocious, immediately let go the man, and came to his mistress, who began to make humble apologies.

"Sure I'm graived to the harrt, sir, that he should have been so unshivil; but sure he's only a dog, sir—poor Ran's dog. And sure he knows no betther, sir. Sure he thought you was a-coming to harrum meself, mebby, and it was definding his own masther's swatehearrt he was, to be sure."

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the man, in a crackling, crashing peal of laughter, that broke like joyous thunder through the woods, and was echoed far and wide.

Then Judy lifted her eyes and looked at the stranger for the first time—looked at him in wonder.

The man was a giant—the very tallest human being Judy had ever seen in all her life, ever supposed to be possible—also, he was finely proportioned and handsome in his way.

He had long, straw-colored hair, that hung, untrimmed, on his shoulders, and a long, straw-colored beard, that fell, untrimmed, on his breast. He had large, clear-cut features, of the Anglo-Saxon style; strong, blue eyes, and a complexion reddened by the sun, and not by "fire water." He was dressed in a buckskin coat and trousers, and very high boots. He had a mangy-looking fur cap on his head.

Judy was reassured by his loud laugh, but also somewhat embarrassed, for she felt as if he were making fun of her.

"Ah! now don't mind me. It's a way I have," he said, perceiving her state of confusion. "Who did you say the brute's master was?"

"Ran, sir, me poor Ran!" said loyal Judy, beginning to blush.

"And who may 'Ran' be?"

"Misther Randolph Hay, sir, plaise."

"And what is he to you that you have his dog?"

Judy was not in the least degree offended by these impertinent questions. She did not even perceive the impertinence. She was embarrassed, however, and answered hesitatingly:

"Please, sir, he's my—he's my—I'm his—I'm his—— The two av us are engaged, sir!" she finally managed to say plainly.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I see!" said the colossus, looking from his lofty height down upon little Judy.

She was blushing, twisting the corner of her shawl and keeping her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"I am a very insolent fellow to ask you so many questions, my child; but you must let me ask you a few more. Who are you, and how came you to be out in this wilderness alone?"

"I warrn't me lone, sir. I had me dog."

"But he could not have protected you even from me. I could have shot him, or stabbed him to death, while he held me fast."

"Oh, but you wouldn't ha' done it, sir. Sure you're too tinder-harrted, big as you are, to hurrt a poor baste that wasn't hurrtin' you, only holding you off from meself, sir," said Judy, piteously.

"No, I wouldn't, but another man mightn't have been

so considerate. You have not answered my question, though. How came you out in the woods alone?"

"Oh, sir, it was all along av a dhrame itself," answered Judy, a little ashamed of the confession.

"A dream?"

"Yes, sure, a dhrame, sir. It was the night before last and I had only parrted with Ran on that same mauning at sunrise."

"What was your dream?"

"Sure, sir, ye'll be after laughing at me again."

"No, indeed I won't! Tell me your dream?"

"Well, then, it was the night—night before last that I dhramed I saw me poor Ran laying doon on the grownd in the woods, woonded, and blading, and dying! Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Judy, breaking into irrepressible tears and sobs at the picture her imagination had called up.

"There, there, there, there," said the giant, tenderly stroking her head with every word; "be comforted, little girl. Your Ran is all right, all right!"

"Oh, do you know, sir? Are you sure? Are you sure you're sure?" demanded Judy, passing, with the swiftness of her race, from grief to joy.

"Yes, I'm sure I'm sure! I myself picked him up, badly hurt, and put him on a stretcher, and carried him to the fort."

"Oh, the saints be praised! the blissid saints be praised! They've heard me prayers! And he's all right noo, though he were badly hurt the night before last?"

"Yes, he is all right. I saw him this morning! He is out of danger, though a little wrong in his head; but that will come all right, too, by and by!"

"Will you take me to him? Is he far off? Can I see him?" breathlessly demanded Judy.

"Yes, you can see him, and he is near by, and I will take you," said the hunter, heartily.

But Judy had sunk down on the ground where she now sat, with her head leaning on the neck of the dog.

And the hunter noticed, for the first time, how exhausted she was.

"Look here, my poor girl, you are half fainting! What is the matter with you? Are you sick?" he anxiously inquired.

"I have been walking all day, and have eaten nothing since mauning, whin I ate three biscuits," said Judy.

"You are famished and worn out," said the hunter, as he hastily took off a leather bag that was slung over his shoulder, opened it and exhibited—a woodland feast!—venison, grouse, buffalo tongue, all well cooked, and white bread well baked, though a backwoodsman's hands had prepared the repast. Lastly he drew from his pocket a flask of whisky.

"Here, child! take a sup of this first," said the hunter, offering the flask.

"Oh, if you plaise, no; but thanky' all the same," said Judy, shrinking.

"But why not? It will do you good," persisted the hunter.

"'Cause I can't take the craychur raw. It do choke me. It did before!"

"Oh! that's it, is it? Well, here, chew this while I go and get some water," said the hunter, as he cut off a morsel of the boiled buffalo tongue and gave it to her on the point of his knife.

Then he seized a tin can from his bag, and disappeared in the thicket, beside the road.

Soon he reappeared again, bringing the water.

Judy begged him to let her drink that first, as she was so thirsty.

He gave her the can, and she drank about two-thirds of its contents, and then returned it to him.

He poured some whisky from his flask into what remained of the water in the can, and gave it to her, saying:

"Now you must drink some of this. I'm the doctor, you know, and I order it. You needn't drink it all, if you object very much, but you must drink some."

Judy obediently took one mouthful of the fiery liquid, and then handed the can back, with a pleading look.

"Ah! if you beg off that way I shall have to give in!" laughed the colossus, as he took the can.

He filled it up from the flask, making the drink much stronger, and then saying:

"Here's to your good health—and Ran's," tossed it down his own throat.

Then he sat down and cut bread and meat for Judy and for himself.

"Oh! plaise give something to poor Tip! See how hungry he looks. How he watches us! And how patient and well-behaved he is!" pleaded Judy.

"Sartainly! Tip shall have a feast! Here, Tip!" said the host, and he threw a well-covered bone of venison to the dog, who made a slow, satisfactory meal of all the meat that was left on it.

"My hut is about half a mile from here, right on the way to the fort, which is about two miles further off. You will have to rest here a spell before you are able to walk there. And while you are resting, I want you to tell me exactly how it was that your Ran left—what place was it?"

"Grizzly."

"Left Grizzly. You said he left on the day before yesterday, in the morning."

"Oh, yes!"

"Now, tell me all about it. Everything you know! You see this poor Ran was robbed, as well as half murdered and left for dead! There, now! Don't go back on a scare! He is all right now! Out of danger, though a little out of his head, as well!"

"Must I begin at the beginning?" inquired Judy.

"Yes, begin at the beginning," replied the giant.

Then the girl told her own and her brother's short story as it is already known to the reader.

The hunter heard it patiently until it "landed" the brother and sister in the mining camp at Grizzly Gulch.

Then Judy stopped to take breath, and the hunter took advantage of the pause to say:

"What I wanted to know was about Ran."

"And ain't meself going to till you immadiately? Sure and the sthory is just now raiching me poor Ran!" said Judy.

And then she went on to tell him how, though all the miners in the camp had been very kind to her brother and herself, Ran Hay had been the very kindest. He had lent her brother money and clothes and provisions, and had helped him to build a cabin exactly like his (Ran's) own, and right beside it. How the three friends, Ran, Mike

and Judy, had lived in love and good will like two brothers and a sister,"until—until—until——"

"Until Ran turned from being Judy's brother to being Judy's lover!" put in the hunter.

"Yis," confessed Judy, with downcast eyes.

"Now tell me whatever put an end to this satisfactory state of affairs and sent the lover away from the happy valley to fall among thieves?" inquired the hunter.

Judy suppressed a sob and a burst of tears, and so controlling herself, went on to explain how "suddintly, on the first av April, kim the news to the camp that Ran Hay had kim into a great fortin, and all he had to do was to go Aist and prove that himself was himself and no ither, to walk straight into that fortin. And so that same night of the blissid first av April Ran got all ready to start; and be sunup the nixt morning, being the blissid second av April, he did lave the camp to go Aist."

"Did he go alone?" inquired the hunter.

"Och, no! A good friend av his own—and a rale gintleman be the same token, though meself nivir could like him—wint alang with him for kimpany," said Judy.

"Did Ran take money or valuables with him?"

"No, no money, only a bag of goold, but that same was worth hundreds av dollars."

"Anything else?"

"Oh, nothing but doctormints and papers to prove himself was himself legal and lawful."

"Hum! What was the name of the man who went with him?"

"With Ran?"

"Yes, of course, with Ran."

"Limmy see—limmy see, now! I don't know his rale name. The bhoys called him Gintleman Geff, 'cause he was so illigant. Why, he was that illigant I had to do up six shirts and pairs av stocks and no ind to the handkerchers iviry wake. So the bhoys called him Gintleman Geff. The bhoys do nickname most ivirybody. Sure they called me own brother No-Man's Mike, because he was born an orphint, same as meself."

"And you don't know Gentleman Geff's real name?"

"No, I don't."

"And he—— But what was such an elegant gentleman doing in the mining camp?"

"Saying the worruld, to be sure. He wasn't no miner."

"How did he live?"

"He won money at cards sometimes and stayed in Ran's cabin. Ran and me brother was pards; but Ran stayed in his own cabin and me brother in hizzen, and meself kept hoose for me brother and did for the thra av thim."

"I see. And this went on until the first of April, when the news of his great fortune came to Ran."

"Yis, sir."

"How did this news come to such an out-of-the-world place as Grizzly?"

"Ah, thin, did ye think we niver say a newspaper at Grizzly at all, at all? Sure, Ran tuk one himself—the great New York *Wakely Thrumpeter,* which was brought out to him from 'Frisco wanst a wake be the ixpressman. He saw the vartisement in that for the nixt av kin to the great Hay fortin, so he did, and he knowed that were himself and no ither. And he had all the doctormints and shiftickimints about marrying and christening and being born into 'awful weddinglock, and all that, which his own father had keerfully tuk keer av for him, and whin he died, left to him to prove himself were himself, in case av nade."

"Exactly. And with these papers Ran Hay departed on the morning of the first of April, accompanied by this Gentleman Geff."

"Yis."

"Now, why do you suppose this elegant gentleman chose to start on a long tramp to San Francisco with Randolph Hay?"

"Not a bit av me knows; but I do sippose, as the gintleman was tired av the mining camp and wanted to go away, and tuk the convanience and purtection av Ran's kimpany to go."

"Oh! He took the convenience and protection of Ran's company! But you, a little girl, came through the wilderness alone! You had no protection!"

"Yis, I had! Tip's! Besides, I nivir thought av nothing but finding me pore bhoy. But, say, I'm all risted now. Shan't we go on and see Ran?" Judy impatiently inquired.

"Yes," replied the hunter, who had long finished his

meal, and had been engaged in feeding the scraps to Tip, who exhibited, as the result of his long journey and spare diet, an insatiable appetite.

"But," continued the hunter, as he prepared to depart, "are you sure that Ran will be glad to see you?"

"Me own thrue Ran? Glad to see me? What div ye mane?" demanded Judy, in perplexity and displeasure.

"It seems that he is a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman, and has come into a large fortune."

"Yis, that is all thrue enough. He is a gintleman, and he have come into a big fortin; but, shure, he wouldn't be the laste bit av a gintleman if he bruk all his promises to his thrue gurrl because he have got a fortin and she has none. But that will niver be. It isn't only a gintleman he is! He's that; but he's something betther nor that. He's Ran! d'ye mind! Ran! And that same manes ivirything that is good and thrue and noble. And div ye nivir hint a brith to the contrary av that, or I'll nivir spake to ye again!" cried Judy, indignantly, her fine face flaming into fiery beauty.

The hunter thought that this was a poor return for all his kindness to the wayfarer; but he laughed, and began his defense.

"Why, my poor girl——"

"Howld yer tongue!" cried the fiery young daughter of Erin. "Shure, I know what ye mane. But ye shan't say it. Ye mane I'm just a pore, ignirint gurrl, not fit to be a gintleman's wife! But, you wait. Ran and me—we are no fules! Ran manes to go to college, and put me to schule, and me brither inter any ginteel calling he likes. You'll see!"

"Perhaps I may and perhaps I may not live so long; but don't be angry with me," said the hunter, good-humoredly.

"Oh, shure, I'm not angry wid ye at all, at all; for what would ail me to be angry wid ye, and ye so good till me and me dog? Shure, it's only mad I was, wid ye spaking avil of me bhoy; but that's all over now ye have took it back. But, did ye say he was robbed as well as most murthered?"

"Yes."

"And his bag of gold gone?"

"Yes."

"Oh, wirra, wirra! But the doctormints and shiftickimints—they are all right?"

"I am sorry to say they are gone, also, for there was nothing left on the boy's person but his clothes," said the hunter.

Judy stared.

"Thin, how the mischief did ye know it was Ran? Ye nivir seed him before."

"I didn't; but a lady at the fort, who had known his mother in her lifetime and himself in his childhood, recognized him."

"And the doctormints, and the shiftifikits, all gone, did ye say?" demanded Judy, suddenly recurring to the previous question.

"Yes, I said so; that is, I said that there was nothing found with the boy but the clothes on his back."

"Och, hone! Oh, howly mither of Moses! thin he'll niver be able to prove that himself's himself, and walk into the great fortin," howled Judy.

"Oh, yes, he may. The documents, if he had them about him——"

"If he had them about him! Shure, ain't I afther telling you he did have thim?" tartly demanded Judy.

"What a little spitfire you are! Well, granted that he had them about him, they must have been only attested copies, the original records being in some parish register," patiently replied the colossus.

"And what's all that maning? Shure, meself don't know."

"Then you'll have to go to school, true enough," said the hunter; and he explained to her the relative value and security of recorded documents and attested copies.

"Thin, be the powers above, it's a goode thing he did not carry away the parish bookes instead av the copy bookes!" exclaimed Judy.

The hunter laughed aloud; and after that they trudged on in silence, followed by the dog, until the man, noticing how nearly worn out by her two days' walk the girl seemed to be, turned, and said:

"You poor, little, tired thing, let me take you up and tote you. I could do it as easy as you could carry a doll." And he made a motion to lift her.

"Don't you dar' to tetch me!" she cried, with flashing eyes, springing to the other side of the road.

Tip growled, and showed his teeth.

"All right! Just as you say! No offense whatever. Only you needn't snap a man's head off for wanting to do you a kindness," laughed the hunter.

"Then be after kaping yer hands to ye'self," said Judy, her temper subsiding.

"Just so. Now will you come along? See! I have got both hands in my pockets. And if we don't walk on we shall not reach the fort before the tattoo beats and then we can't see Ran to-night."

CHAPTER XV

THE MEETING

Judy needed no other spur. She hastened on before, walking fast in spite of her fatigue and looking back from time to time to hurry her companion, who pretended to lag behind.

"It's ye'self is lazy!" she said, at length. "If I was a great, big, tall, long-legged man like you are, I would not be craping along like a snail."

"I was afraid of intruding on your ladyship," said the man.

" 'Fraid o' what?"

"Of crowding you, then!"

"Oh, thin dickins a fear av me letting you do that same. Kim along faster, do."

They walked on with increased speed through the thick woods, until they reached a point in the trail where a very narrow path diverged from the right.

They were now very near the spot where Ran Hay had been shot. But the hunter forbore to mention the fact to the girl.

"Turn!" he said, pointing to the path. "This is our way, and let me go first to clear it; the timber is very close here."

He entered the path, pushing aside the interlacing bushes to allow his companion to follow him.

The path soon began to turn and turn again, upon itself, in a "walls of Troy" pattern, down a precipice that could be descended in no other way.

Judy, close behind her stalwart guide, protected by his bulk, walked in safety, followed by her dog.

In half an hour they reached the bottom and found themselves in the deep and narrow valley known as Longman's Gulch, with a little stream running through its bottom, and another precipice of rocks rising on the opposite side.

"Now here's my cabin," said the hunter, pointing to the log hut concealed by the low growth of saplings at the roof on the steep. "And if you are tired you had better go in and rest a while."

"No, no, no, let us go on. Where's the fort?" inquired Judy.

"Up on the table-land on the top of that bank, and about a mile away. The sun is an hour and a half high and you will have time to rest a little while, and then be able to reach the fort before tattoo."

"When is tattoo, thin?"

"At sunset."

"And the sun only an hour and a half high. And that steep hillside to climb, and the fort a mile off. Oh, thin, let's go straight on," exclaimed Judy, leading the way.

Longman hurried after her. The dog after both. They reached the edge of the stream.

"You will have to let me carry you over this!" said the hunter.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed Judy, taking a rapid survey of possibilities, and springing down to the lowest edge, gathered up her skirts, and leaped lightly from rock to rock in the bed of the brook, until she had crossed the water and "landed" safely on the other side.

"Hoo-rah-h!" shouted the hunter, as he waved his old fur cap in circles around his head, making the rocks and caverns echo all around.

Then he strode after her, stepping from rock to rock with long strides until he had crossed the stream. The dog swam after and climbed the bank and shook a shower all over them.

The three stood for a moment to recover breath, and then the hunter said:

"Now we must climb this steep. It is a great deal worse than the other. I must put you before me, Miss Judy, so that if you slip I may catch you and prevent you from falling to the bottom—which would be death. But don't be afraid. I will not lay finger on you, you little touch-me-not, unless it be to save your life."

After this explanation he pointed to an opening in the brushwood at the foot of the steep from which the path began to ascend.

Judy went into it and began to climb. Longman went after and kept close behind her. The dog followed.

The path zigzagged, here and there, following the possibilities of the face of the steep. Judy found it very hard, especially as she had to go in front for her own safety. Several times she slipped, and but for the strong arms held out behind her she must have gone to the bottom.

At length they reached the top in safety.

"All the holy saints be praised!" cried Judy, fervently, as she stood upon the broad table-land panting for breath.

The hunter took off his fur cap and wiped the perspiration from his face.

The dog scrambled to the top and stood and shook himself.

Judy looked around her.

Not a tree or shrub grew on this table-land, only a sort of coarse grass.

But opposite to them, against the western horizon, she saw the dark line of the picket wall of the fort, brought into bolder relief by the sun shining behind it.

"Let us go on," said Judy, impatiently.

"As soon as you have got your breath," replied the hunter.

"Sure I've got it now," said Judy.

And she started at a rapid rate to walk across the table-land toward the fort.

Longman walked after her and overtook her.

The dog followed as before.

A twenty minutes' fast walk brought them to the gates of the fort.

Jerry Noddin happened again to be on duty there.

"Whisht! Is it yourself, Sammy? And sure it's a purty gurrl ye have got in the wake," said the latter.

"Stow that! The young lady is a relation of the wounded man, and has come all the way from Grizzly to look after him," replied the hunter, in a low tone.

"The divil ye say! Is it a swishter or a cousin she is? And how the divil did she, living at Grizzly, know about he being kilt entirely at Longman's?" demanded the sentinel.

"She was warned by a dream," replied the hunter, answering the second question, but ignoring the first, as he did not wish to expose Judy to the "chaff" of the soldiers.

"Warrnd be a dhrame? Och, noo, tell that same to the horse marines!"

"Well, she thinks she was, and it's all the same to her. Come, Miss Judy," he said to the girl, who had lingered behind and had heard no word of this conversation. "Come, we will go on to the hospital where Mr. Hay is lying."

Judy came up and joined him, and, still followed by the faithful hound, they passed, at this hour, unchallenged into the fort, crossed the inclosure and went to the northwest angle of the wall, where stood the hospital and the surgeon's quarters. An orderly was on duty at the door.

"Is Dr. Hill inside?" inquired the hunter.

"Oh, yes—he's there."

"Can you send word to him that a relative of the wounded boy is out here, come to see him?"

"Oh, yes. Tom"—to a man loitering near—"go inside and tell the surgeon there's a lady here come to see the wounded gentleman," said the orderly.

The person addressed passed in, and soon returned, accompanied by the surgeon.

"Ah, Longman! Is this you? And this young"—the surgeon looked at Judy in some doubt, but gave her and politeness the benefit of it, and said—"lady?"

"She is a relation of Mr. Hay's, and has come from Grizzly to see him," replied the hunter.

The surgeon bowed to the "young lady," who hastened to add:

"Oh, yis! if ye plaise, docther dear, and how is me pore bhoy the day?"

The surgeon contemplated the eager, pretty face with

some surprise and perplexity; but with more interest and sympathy as he answered:

"Mr. Hay is doing very well. He is out of bodily danger."

"The holy saints be praised!" cried Judy, clasping her hands, and lifting her eyes.

"But—I was about to say, his mind still wanders, and it may be some time before that is quite right. You must be prepared for this."

"I'm prepeered for ivirything, sir! Will ye let me see him?" pleaded Judy.

"Certainly! Come with me," said the surgeon, leading the way to the interior of the hospital and to the ward where Ran lay.

He was the only patient in the room, of four cots. He lay upon one in a corner between a west and northwest window, covered up to his chin with a white counterpane, over the outside of which his arms were stretched and his hands straying; his bandaged head resting on a white pillow.

"Oh! me pore bhoy! me poor bhoy!" moaned Judy, under her breath, as she caught sight of him.

"You must be quiet. You must not make a noise," whispered the surgeon.

"Oh, I will be quite! I will be quite as death; but may I spake to him?" pleaded Judy.

"Oh, yes, you may speak to him, calmly, you know."

"Oh, yes! sure I'll be carrm as a Carmelite nun itself," said Judy, as she crept on tiptoe to the side of Ran's cot and gazed silently upon the pallid face, looking still more pallid in contrast to the thick, black eyebrows and the long black eyelashes of his closed eyelids.

"Is he aslape, thin?" inquired Judy, turning to the surgeon, who had come up behind her.

"No, he is not asleep. Speak to him. See if he will know you now."

Judy bent over him, and said, softly:

"Ran! Ran, darlint! Look at me! I'm yer own Judy, come to see ye! Spake to me."

The beautiful dark eyes of the wounded boy slowly opened and gazed upon the bowed, earnest face of the girl; but there was no recognition in them.

"Oh, Ran! don't ye know me? Don't ye know yer own Judy? Spake to me, Ran!"

Still gazing blankly in her face, he crooned:

" 'And darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day.' "

CHAPTER XVI

BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

Cleve Stuart's troubles commenced with his honeymoon—ignoble, financial troubles, which he knew very well he was bringing upon himself by marrying Palma Hay.

But he did not repine even in his secret heart.

"I have deserved all I may be called upon to suffer," he said to himself, in the spirit of an expiator. "I have deserved the worst, not for wedding Palma after I had discovered her to be penniless, but for having proposed to marry the invalid girl when I supposed her to be wealthy. Yes, I have deserved all, and more than all, that I may have to bear. But she ought never to suffer, and she never shall do so if any labor or self-denial on my part can save her from it, and so I trust my soul may be purged of its sin against her."

No sign of Cleve's inward distress appeared on his countenance, in his manner, or in the tones of his voice, while he was with Palma, so that she truly believed him to be as happy as she was herself.

And if with her he was always bright, cheerful and animated, this mood was not altogether the effect of self-command, but that of her influence upon him.

There was a sphere of love, peace and innocence emanating from the spirit of the young girl that seemed to envelop him as soon as he came within its circle.

Perhaps there never was in this world a happier bride than Palma Stuart. She was not surrounded by splendor, but by sunshine. She was not "lapped in luxury," but in elysium. She was growing stronger every day. She was getting well. Her nurse, landlady and fellow boarders saw

it and commented on it. Cleve Stuart recognized the fact and knew that she was most likely to live to be his life-long companion.

He knew that under the divine providence he himself had saved her life; he knew, too—oh! dark and dreadful knowledge!—that he had now, in her condition, the power of life and death over her—a power that he might exercise without responsibility to any earthly tribunal. It would only need to withdraw his kind looks and words and acts, and substitute cold contempt, quiet aversion, forbearance of caresses, avoidance of her presence—to send her back to her former state of debility, even unto death—to see her wither as a flower withers when deprived of sunshine and of dew.

But not to gain the throne of the world would Cleve Stuart have taken this course with his little-loved bride.

On the contrary, he devoted himself to her, and made her happy, and so raised her from illness and restored her to health.

But how were they to live?

As has been said, Cleve Stuart had been brought up without a profession, and in the expectation of inheriting a rich Mississippi plantation. He had returned from his years of Eastern travel, after civil war had devastated his native country, to learn that his plantation was a desert, its buildings burned to the ground, its stock carried off, its laborers fled, its land grown up in weeds, the whole turned into a howling wilderness that would require many thousands of dollars and some years of time to reclaim. For the present that ruined plantation must be left to itself. But how was he to live and to support his invalid wife?

The idea of his bachelor life had been to seek some employment as bookkeeper in some mercantile establishment, clerk in some office, or usher in some school, and to devote his leisure hours to the study of law. But the whole of that plan could not be carried out under present circumstances. He might get employment possibly, and he would get it if he could, but his leisure time must be devoted not to the study of law, but to the care of his delicate young bride.

The first step was to seek the needed employment.

He took the *Trumpeter* and searched its advertising columns. He made a list of every advertisement for book-

keepers, clerks and teachers, and answered every one of them, for he said to himself, quoting an old proverb:

"If one don't succeed, another can't fail."

He spent a day in answering the advertisements, and a dollar in postage stamps.

But nothing came of all this. Clearly the proverb was not infallible.

Then he descended a step lower and answered an advertisement for a private secretary; but with no better success.

"I suppose I shall have to try for a coachman's place. I can handle the ribbons pretty well," he said, with a bitter laugh, at the recollection of the time when he used to drive tandem and to be reckoned a crack whip on the English highroads.

At length he advertised on his own account for a situation as clerk, teacher, or bookkeeper; but the money he paid for the advertisement was thrown away. He did not get one single offer.

"I wonder if it would not be just as hard to find a coachman's place or a groom's, or butler's or a waiter's?" he asked himself, with a laugh—"for there seems to be no place in the world for a poor gentleman, even though he may be willing and anxious to work."

Meanwhile the season was advancing, and the Pine Mountain House was being filled up with guests. It was a small but very popular place of summer resort, in a high, wooded country, within an easy walk to the railway station and the steamboat landing, and within little more than an hour's run by rail to New York. The terms, also, were moderate.

These were the attractions that drew Cleve Stuart, as well as others, to the place.

He paid twenty-five dollars a week for himself, his wife and her attendant.

Near the first of June Cleve paid for his fourth week at the "Pines," and then he went to his room to examine his accounts. He was alone.

Palma was sitting out on the piazza, attended by Mrs. Pole. She, poor child, knew nothing of her husband's anxieties. She thought of him as one possessing almost unlimited power, and she rested confident and satisfied with

her dependence upon him. Nor would he, on any account, have dispelled this illusion.

Now he drew down the front blinds, sat down to the little center table, with his back to the windows, and opened his pocketbook, and counted his money. He had just sixty-five dollars left—not enough to pay another month's board at the Pines.

Something must be done—but what?

Board to suit every degree of means might be found in the city, and the small remnant of his funds might be eked out even for two months; but he could not now, when the weather was beginning to grow hot and people were leaving the city, take his fragile wife back thus, except at the risk of her health and life. She required the mountain and woodland air, as well as all his love and care to establish her health, and come what might, Palma's welfare must be his first consideration. She was doing so well here it would be cruel, and might be fatal, to take her away. Besides, she had formed a little circle of friends among the people in the house, who were deeply interested in her, and upon whom she bestowed all the affection she could possibly spare from her adored Cleve, and from her esteemed Poley. The story of her romantic marriage had got about among the guests, and had inspired sympathy for the young pair. Much admiration was spoken apart, in groups, for the young man who had returned from his extended tour over the eastern hemisphere, to find his betrothed dying of a decline, and had married her that he might be always near her and take personal care of her, while she should live; and who had, by the way, taken such excellent and such successful care of her that he was really restoring her to health.

And quietly, unostentatiously, they all helped him in this sacred duty, by judiciously coddling and petting the pretty little invalid bride.

Cleve saw that Palma was beloved, caressed, popular, happy and growing healthy in her present surroundings, and he could not bear the thought of taking her away, until the season should be over, if by any labor or by any sacrifice on his part he could keep her there.

But how to do this, if he could get no employment?

He sat staring at the fifty-dollar greenback, the ten-

dollar note, the five-dollar note, and the four silver quarters that represented the whole of his capital.

Suddenly a bright thought struck him.

"I am richer than I supposed," he said.

And he went to his trunk, unlocked it, and took out a small, steel-bound oaken casket, brought it to the table, touched a secret spring and opened it.

A little tray of diamonds flashed before his eyes. There were a pair of sleeve buttons, each a solitaire large as a pea; there were three front studs, each a solitaire, but smaller than the buttons; there was a scarf-pin, a cluster of brilliants; and there was a ring with another solitaire.

He smiled in self-pity, not unmixed with a little self-reproach, as he looked at these jewels. He had bought them in his prosperous and dandy days, years ago, in Paris; and had liked to display some or all of them on proper occasions. But since his arrival at years of discretion—if, indeed, he had reached that desirable time of life—and especially since his return to the United States, he had never wished to wear them and had never done so. They had lain away in his trunk, never thought of, really forgotten until this hour.

Now he began to compute their value.

"These sleeve buttons, if I remember right, cost me five thousand francs; these studs three thousand; the scarf-pin and the ring somewhere about two thousand each, in all about twelve thousand francs, or about two thousand four hundred of our money. Diamonds, I suppose, have risen in price as everything else has during the war; yet I doubt if I can get more than fifteen hundred for these, at a forced sale; however, I will sell only one at a time."

And Cleve Stuart closed his casket and locked it up in his trunk with the feeling of having come into a small fortune unexpectedly.

He went out with a brighter mien than usual, and took a seat beside his young wife.

At that time there happened to be no one else on the front piazza.

She was reading an evening paper that had been loaned her by a gentleman who had just brought it up from the city—one of those gentlemen who went every morning by

the early train to their business in the city, and returned every afternoon, in the same way, to their families at the Pine Mountain House.

"Oh, see here, Cleve!" she eagerly exclaimed, looking up from the paper. "Here is news of a relation of mine whom I never heard of before in all the days of my life!"

"Ah, indeed!" said Stuart, immediately showing interest.

"Yes, indeed."

"And who may that be?"

"Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore, late of California."

"But if you never heard of him before in all your life, how do you know he is a relation of yours?" laughed Stuart, who knew very well whom she meant.

"Because he is a Hay, of Haymore. And Haymore is my grandfather's seat in Yorkshire, England, of which I have heard my father speak. Just listen while I read this to you."

"Very well, my pet, go on."

"'Society News

"'Mr. Randolph Hay, late of San Francisco, who has just succeeded to one of the finest old estates in England—namely, Haymore, in the West Riding of Yorkshire—sailed for Liverpool last week to take formal possession of his rich inheritance. It appears that the father of Mr. Randolph Hay emigrated to California, and married in that State. Mr. Randolph Hay was born in San Francisco, and considers himself a native American. He lost both parents a few years ago, but has ever since lived in the Gold State. By the death of his grandfather, some months since, he has come into the inheritance of Haymore. But such is his strong attachment to the land of his birth, that—it is confidently asserted—he will let or leave his English manor in the hands of his bailiff, and make his permanent home in New York; and that on his return from England he is soon to lead to the hymeneal altar the beautiful and accomplished Miss Lamia Leegh. The bride and bridegroom-elect have our heartiest congratulations.'

"There! What do you think of that?"

Cleve Stuart had turned pale. He did not reply.

Palma still had her eyes fixed upon the paper, and failed to observe his change of color.

"I did not know I had a cousin in the world. He's the son of that uncle who was killed in California," she went on.

"Do you know much about your father's family, Palma?" inquired Stuart.

"No; very little. I can just vaguely remember bits of conversation between my father and my mother—both of whom went to heaven before I was six years old, you know—and which gave me some faint idea of their condition in life. But these impressions are 'void and without form,' except one fact which is very clear—that both my father and his next eldest brother were discarded by my grandfather, the first for marrying my mother, and the second for refusing to take holy orders and go into the living that was in the gift of the squire. My dear father died, as you know, in New York. My uncle was killed, as we heard, in California. I suppose this fine, new cousin of mine must be the son of the Californian."

"Why not the son of the eldest son, and heir of the squire?"

"Oh! he was killed—unmarried—before my father died; killed by a fall from his horse while hunting. I remember hearing about that while my dear father was in his last illness. You see what a fatality follows the family—two sons killed out of three, and the other dying in his early prime of manhood."

"Yes, it is strange and terrible," said Stuart, vaguely. His thoughts were somewhere else.

"And to think that I, who did not know that I had a relative in the world except my aged grandfather, who had discarded my father, should have this one cousin in New York. It seems so very strange."

"My dear, since you thought you had no relative in the world except your grandfather, now deceased, did it never occur to you that in such a case you would be his heiress?" gravely inquired Stuart.

Palma gazed at him in amazement.

He laughed, and repeated his question. Then she answered:

"Never! Never once! I should as soon have thought of

inheriting the kingdom of England as the manor of Haymore!"

"And yet, but for the turning up of this Californian, you might have come into the estates," gravely observed Stuart.

"Oh, yes; but for the elder brother the younger might succeed," said Palma, smiling. "But now tell me about the lady whom my cousin is going to marry. You have mixed freely with fashionable society in New York. Do you know 'the beautiful and accomplished Miss Lamia Leegh?'"

"Yes, I know her," replied Stuart, changing color and trying to steady his voice.

"Oh, tell me about her. I love to hear about brides and brides-elect. Is she beautiful, or is that only newspaper gossip?"

"She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life," replied Stuart, in a low, trembling tone.

"Oh! describe her to me, Cleve. Is she blond or brunette?"

"Blond."

"Well, describe her to me as you can describe. Make me see her, standing right before us, as you see her in your memory."

Stuart summoned all his powers of self-control, steadied his nerves and tones, and drew a vocal picture of the splendid blond Juno who had dazzled him out of his senses and his honor and then discarded him. But he did not tell his wife that.

"What a divine beauty she must be, Cleve! The daughter of a New York millionaire, of course!" said Palma, reveling in the picture without a particle of envy or jealousy.

"No, my dear," gravely replied Stuart, who had recovered his self-possession—"no, 'Fortune never comes with both hands full,' never bestows marvelous beauty and enormous wealth on the same individual."

"What is she, then?"

"A governess in Peter Vansitart's family."

"O-h-h!" exclaimed Palma, in much surprise. "I thought at least she was a young lady of fashion."

"She is, notwithstanding her 'condition of servitude,'" replied Stuart, with a peculiar smile.

"Why—how is that?" inquired Palma

"It is because she is a woman with a genius for success, and circumstances have favored her ambition."

"I—do not understand," said Palma, slowly.

"Of course, you do not, my dear. This is the way of it: Lamia Leegh is as beautiful and accomplished as she is represented to be. She is also magnetic and fascinating. In a fashionable drawing room she is a sun—a splendor She is the great attraction in Mrs. Vansitart's receptions. Very few people, if any, know that she is the family governess. She has gained quite an ascendancy over Mrs. Vansitart's mind, always receives with her, as if she were a younger sister. And as the elder had no daughters ready to come out and be thrown in the shade by the splendor of Lamia's beauty, and no sons old enough to be dazzled and distracted by the same, the lady sees no danger in bringing forward this resplendent goddess as the belle of her drawing rooms."

"I begin to see. Well, it is a great advance for the beautiful governess to marry the wealthy English squire. Is she as good as she is beautiful?" dreamily inquired Palma.

"No," emphatically answered Stuart.

"No?" questioned Palma, in surprise.

"No. She is a cold, heartless, unprincipled, unscrupulous adventuress."

"Why, Cleve!"

"She has one aim and object in life—to rise in the social scale. To that she would sacrifice truth, honor and justice; to that she would immolate any friend, relative, or benefactor."

"Why, Cleve!"

"My child, I ought not to tell you these things. I ought not to sully your pure mind with the knowledge of these evils. Pardon me, Palma," said Stuart, patiently; and yet he felt that it had done him good so to expose and censure Lamia Leegh. In holding her up in her true character to Palma's view he had also held her up to his own, and was thus enabled better to realize her selfishness and wickedness.

"But how do you know?" was the pertinent question of Palma.

"From close observation of the woman. Let us talk no more of her."

"But you will go and see my cousin when you return to New York, and you will tell him about me and ask him to call and see me?"

"I think not, Palma."

"But why?"

"Because we cannot know him without your knowing his wife, and I should not like you to know her."

"Very well, then. I shall not care much to miss the acquaintance of a cousin whom I have never seen," she said.

A number of the guests who had been out walking now returned to the house and stepped upon the piazza.

Stuart arose to give his seat to a lady who had been kind to Palma.

He sauntered to the end of the porch, and stood there looking off into vacancy and anathematizing himself for the clinging madness of passion that rendered it impossible for him to speak of Lamia Leegh without anguish.

"Well as I know her now," he said to himself—"well as I ought to know her, after she led me into an act of baseness that it will take my whole life to expiate; well as I know, too, that if I were free from all bonds to-day, and if she were free, and if both were wealthy, I would rather kill myself and take my chances in the other world than descend to the deep degradation of a marriage with her. Yet, oh! the clinging, cleaving madness, like a robe of fire, consumes me!"

He left the porch and strayed out into the coolness of the twilight in the pine woods. There he walked until the last light faded out of the sky.

Then he returned to the illuminated house, where the guests were dancing.

Neither Cleve nor Palma participated in that amusement. He joined her in their own room, where he found her sewing by a shaded lamp.

He took a book that they were both interested in and sat down and read aloud to her.

In this manner many of their evenings were spent.

Mrs. Pole had made acquaintance with the housekeeper and waitresses of the establishment and passed many of her

leisure hours in their company, leaving the young people alone together.

So went the time.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LADY-ELECT AND GENTLEMAN GEFF

JUNE had far advanced. The midsummer holidays had commenced, and the annual exodus from city to country was in progress.

The Vansitart family were at Newport. The Vansitart mansion was deserted by all except the governess, the cook and the butler.

It was Miss Leegh's vacation also, and there were to be no lessons until the first of September. It was at her own option to go with the family to Newport, or to remain in the town house on Fifth Avenue, and her liberal salary would continue, whether she should go or stay. She chose to stay, for reasons which she explained to Mrs. Vansitart. They were these:

The midsummer holidays spent in the city would afford her an excellent opportunity for the preparation of the trousseau for her marriage with Mr. Randolph Hay, which was to come off in the autumn. For during the midsummer milliners and dressmakers would be comparatively at leisure to give prompt and careful attention to her commissions, so that she would not have to wait; goods would be cheaper, so that her money would go further; and, moreover, she would be free from callers, as all the Vansitart clique were out of town, so that her time would be at her own disposal; and, finally, she would be on hand to receive Mr. Randolph Hay, who was expected to return about the last of July, and who, immediately on his arrival at New York, would present himself at the Vansitart house.

Mrs. Vansitart had always been very kind and liberal to Miss Leegh, but since the young lady's engagement to the wealthy English squire she had been even more so.

"You must let me be as an elder sister to you on this occasion, my dear, and help to provide your trousseau," she said, as she put a check for five hundred dollars in her hand

at the moment of bidding her good-by to go on board the steamer for Newport.

And the hurry and confusion of the leave-taking and departure served to cover the embarrassment of the governess, who was too covetous and too politic to decline this bounty, and yet too proud and vain to accept it without a sense of humiliation that excited something like hatred of the giver.

Besides this, Mrs. Vansitart had been so lavish in her presents to the beautiful and beloved governess of her children that Lamia had but little need to spend any part of her liberal salary on clothing or ornaments, so that she saved the greater part of her income.

All her funds, including her savings and Mrs. Vansitart's last check, Lamia laid out to what she considered the very best advantage. That is, she forbore to buy jewelry or India shawls, because to get the best of these would have taken more capital, ten times told, than she possessed; but she bought a beautiful bridal dress and veil, and three other "magnificent" costumes, made up by the most "celebrated" artists in the city.

The bride would bring no diamonds or camel's hair wraps, but no doubt the bridegroom, after marriage, would be proud and happy to lay all these splendors and luxuries at her feet.

It was the evening of the thirty-first of July.

The dressmaker had just sent home an elegant dress of pale blue satin and damassé, richly trimmed with duchesse lace.

Lamia had tried it on, and was standing before a large mirror in an ecstasy of self-admiration, when a servant rapped and brought in a card.

Lamia took it and read:

"Randolph Hay."

Then she glanced at the crest above the name—it was a lion's head. Her eyes lingered on this badge of rank with pride.

Then she turned to the servant, and said:

"Say to Mr. Hay that I am at home and will be with him in a few moments."

The man bowed and withdrew.

She looked at herself again as reflected in the mirror with a rapture of self-worship.

"I am perfect," she thought in her heart, "simply perfect. I have the stature and stateliness of Juno; the grace and beauty of Venus; the spirit and expression of Psyche! I do not need a jewel, not one, not even a poetic pearl! But I will put this flower in my hair."

She selected a rich tea rose from a vase on the table, and twined its stem in her red-gold tresses and surveyed herself again.

"I wonder what he will think of me? I wonder what he will find to say to me? But I must not keep him waiting!" she said. And she sailed slowly and superbly out of the room and down the stairs.

She entered the drawing room.

Gentleman Geff was standing with his back to the richly carved chimney-piece, and his face to the door by which she came in.

She saw the slight start with which he recognized her, after seeming for an instant to doubt her identity.

Then he advanced to meet her. She gave him both hands and a smile that should have raised him to the seventh heaven; but it did not, for Gentleman Geff had just come from Paris, where he had been on intimate terms with some of the most celebrated beauties of the ballet and the *demi-monde*.

Yet in taking her hands and in answering her smile, he said:

"You are looking uncommonly well, by Jove! I was at her majesty's drawing room three weeks ago, don't you know, and there wasn't a woman there to be compared with you; not so well groomed, either, 'pon my life!"

While he spoke they were sauntering toward a group of chairs, where they seated themselves.

"I hope you had a pleasant voyage," said Lamia, feeling disappointed and depressed, she scarcely knew why.

"Ah—yes! pretty fair. July is a good month to cross in, don't you know. 'Pon my life, Lamia, you are handsomer than ever! There isn't a professional beauty in London to equal you! What a sensation you would make in a London ballroom!"

"You flatter me," said Miss Leegh, in a low voice, scarcely knowing what else to say, or how to receive these very direct, not to say coarse compliments.

"'Pon my life I don't. Society is sure to agree with me! I quite long to exhibit you, don't you know! It is too late to take you to London this season; for the last drawing room for the year has been held. But I tell you what we can do. After we have been married, and have made the regulation wedding tour, we can go to Washington, at the meeting of Congress—spend the month of January there; attend all the presidential and ministerial receptions, and all that sort of thing! Have you ever been to Washington?"

"No; I have been all over Canada, and all over Europe and into the contingent portions of Asia and Africa, yet have never seen the capital of the United States."

"Well, we will see it next winter. And then about the month of May we will go to London. Get there in the height of the season. We will attend her majesty's drawing room. There is always a drawing room in the month of May, and then you will eclipse them all, don't you know. Professional beauties will be nowhere!"

Lamia listened to his talk in growing anxiety. He did not seem like himself. She could make nothing of him, until he arose to bid her good-night. Then he took her in his arms and kissed her, with such effusion that she caught his breath and perceived that he had been drinking.

This discovery, instead of troubling her, actually relieved her, since it explained his conduct. And as for the morality of the question she cared nothing for his morals, nothing for his reputation, nothing for himself. She cared only for his supposed wealth, rank and position.

Meanwhile, Gentleman Geff left the house with a jaunty air, and walked along a cross street leading to Broadway, where he intended to take a stage for his hotel.

But just as he turned the corner he came up face to face with a woman at the sight of whom he reeled back as if he had received a staggering blow.

"Good Heaven, Jenny! Is this you?"

"Yes, Kite, it is I!" she answered, grimly.

"Where in the deuce did you come from?"

"From Liverpool, in an emigrant ship that landed three days ago."

"And what in the devil are you doing here?"

"Watching you. I hunted you down. I traced you from London to Paris. From Paris back to London. Thence to Liverpool. I could not get face to face with you, try as I might. I would have come over in the same ship with you, only they did not take steerage passengers, and I had not money enough to pay for a cabin passage, so I came in the steerage of the *Naiad Queen*."

"What do you want of me?"

"I want to be acknowledged as your lawful wife."

"Come, come, girl! All that is the sheerest nonsense!"

"Is it nonsense when I have my marriage lines?"

"Not worth the paper they art written on, Jenny. My name is not Kightly Montgomery; it is Jeremiah Johnson."

"And twenty more aliases."

"But don't you see, my dear Jenny, how that invalidates your marriage lines, as you call them? You are married to one of the aliases."

"Then you shall do me justice, or I will make it warm for you here. It is not for my sake, but for the sake of the innocent child that has never seen the light. You shall marry me under your own proper name, and then—you may go off and get yourself hanged, as I suppose you are sure to do sooner or later, and I shall not care. I only want the ceremony performed so that no one may be able to call my innocent child ill names. That's all, Kite."

"My dear Jenny, you are very funny. Don't you see how absurd it is for you to threaten me? And how vain to suppose that you can get anything by such a course? Why, look here, girl. Just now you said I had twenty aliases. Perhaps I have. But I can tell you this, I have a wife for every alias—as many wives as aliases."

"Oh, you devil!"

"Don't use bad language. Listen to sound reason. You howl for justice. You want me to marry you over again by my own proper name. Bless your soul! so do the other nineteen! I can't do justice to all, you know."

"The hangman will do justice to you, you villain!"

"All in good time, Jenny. But as I was saying, I can't do justice to all. I can only do justice to one, and that

ought to be the one I first married, years and years ago, you know. I don't know where she is now, or whether she is living; but even if she should be dead, there's the second wife, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth, and the sixth, and the seventh—all taking precedence of you, Jenny, who are the seventeenth, or eighteenth, or nineteenth. I really can't keep count of them all."

"Oh, you black, black, black devil!"

"Come, come, woman, keep a civil tongue in your head. You need not call ill names, nor make malicious threats. It is all quite useless. You can do nothing. Capt. Kightly Montgomery is not known in New York, nor ever was heard of anywhere else but in the small market town of Medge, in Hants, where his head was temporarily turned by the beauty of the curate's pretty daughter, a silly country girl. If you were to try to 'make it warm' for me here, you would only get yourself put into prison for conspiracy or blackmailing. The laws are very strict in this country."

"I know nothing about the laws of this country. They may be as hard on the poor as the laws of our own country. And I don't care that for them!" she cried, snapping her fingers. "You can't frighten me. Nothing can happen to me so evil as that which has already happened through you. I cannot be more degraded than I am. I cannot be more unhappy than I am. I cannot be more desperate than I am."

"If you are so desperate, my dear, why, there is the river—the cure-all for griefs like yours. This street that you are on leads straight to it. Turn; there is the moon sinking toward the western horizon. Walk straight toward the setting moon until you come to the pier; then walk straight along the pier until you come to the end of it. By that time the moon will be dropping behind the horizon. You, with dramatic art, can drop into the river. Behold all!"

"Oh, why does not a bolt from heaven kill you? I look at you, and wonder that you are let live. But you shall not drive me to suicide. Though I left my dear father's house to marry you—as I supposed—yet I have not forgotten all his lessons. I know that I must live till the Lord shall call me hence. I must live also for the little life that depends on mine. No, Kightly Montgomery! You shall not by your mockeries drive me to suicide, or to any other

sin. I will not go to the river. But I will tell you where I will go. I will tell you, because I will do nothing underhanded. I will go to that palatial mansion you have just left——"

Gentleman Geff started.

"You will not dare to do that!" he exclaimed.

"I wonder what I would not dare to do, desperate as I am? Anything, except wantonly to break the laws of God! Why, Kightly Montgomery, I am afraid of nothing that man or devil can do to me."

"But you will not go to that house, Jenny. Why should you? The people living there are nothing to you. They are nothing even to me," he declared, moderating his tone, though inwardly seething with fear and wrath and wild conjecture as to how he should dispel the perils that were around him.

"Listen!" said the girl. "I had better explain fully. When I had traced you to Liverpool, and failed to get an interview with you, I succeeded in discovering that you were to sail in the *Scorpio* on Saturday. Then I took steerage passage on the *Naiad Queen,* which sailed on Monday of the same week, six days sooner than your steamer. I arrived here three days ago, and stayed at Castle Garden, and haunted the piers, waiting for the arrival of the *Scorpio.*"

"Waylaying me, in point of fact!"

"Yes, waylaying you, if you will put it so. When your steamer came in this afternoon I was on the watch. But, though a stream of passengers passed me, I saw you. You were dressed—as you are now—as for an evening party. You must have made a careful toilet in your stateroom."

"I did."

"As I went toward you, you stepped into a hansom, which was immediately driven off."

"Ah! ha! But, really, I did not see you, nor dream that you were there."

"I believe that. But, fortunately, I heard the direction given to the driver—'Mr. Peter Vansitart, Number — Fifth Avenue.' I charged my memory with that address, I do assure you."

"I have no doubt you did, my amiable friend!"

"I did not know what route to take to follow you, but I inquired of a policeman what street cars I should take to

convey me to Mr. Peter Vansitart's, — Fifth Avenue. He told me to get into a Fourth Avenue car, and ride up as far as —— Street, and then get out and go across to Fifth Avenue, where I should easily find the number and the house. I did so, and reached the house in about an hour from starting, for the car stopped many times on the route, and once was blocked. You in your cab must either have loitered on your way or else have made a call."

"I did. At an uptown saloon to get a drink."

"To get several drinks, I suspect, from your looks and manner. However, just before I reached the house I saw a cab standing at the door, saw you get out and go in; and saw the cab drive away. I walked on up to the house, intending to wait until you should come out."

"You had run me to earth at last, it seems."

"Yes, indeed, and to a purpose! I heard more than I had expected to hear! As I went up to the house I met a newsboy who had just left a paper at the area door. I thought I would question the lad about the people you were visiting. I asked him who lived there."

"Humph! You would make a good detective," grimly observed Gentleman Geff. She took no notice of the interruption, but continued:

"He told me that the Vansitarts lived there; that they were awful rich people; that the ladies were all awful good, and that one of them was awful pretty. Ah! how strange it is that the lad's words should return to me bringing a sense of humor, even in my misery!" said the girl, with a faint smile.

"Poor devil, she is a little off!" was Gentleman Geff's muttered comment.

"Yes," continued the girl, "he said the ladies there were awful good, and that they always gave him a Christmas, an Easter and a Fourth of July, and thumping ones at that! And that the young lady who was awful pretty was going to marry an English gent, who was an awful swell."

"What do not newsboys know?" whistled Gentleman Geff.

"I asked him," continued the girl, "if he knew the person who had just come in. Why, he said, that was the very swell the young lady was going to marry, and that there was lots about the wedding in the newspapers already."

"Confound the newspapers!" burst out Gentleman Geff. "What else did the young rascal tell you?"

"He would not have told me anything more if I had not bribed him with a shilling; for he was in a hurry to run off and sell his papers. He told me that there was a full account of the great English swell, who was a-going to marry the beautiful young lady! How he had not always been a swell, but had been in the gold mines of California, until he was advertised for to come forward and take possession of a great estate that was left him by his grandfather, in England. And how he had gone to England to settle up his affairs,and was coming back to marry the beautiful young lady, whose name the newsboy had forgotten. And, in fact, he had come back, the boy said, for the gent that had just gone in the house was himself, and no other, for the boy knew him well by sight. This was all I cared to know at the time, so I let the boy go off, crying his papers, and I walked up and down the avenue, waiting for you to come out," concluded the girl.

While they had spoken he had turned into a quiet cross street, where all the houses were closed and the inmates apparently retired to rest. Only the street lamps at the corners dimly lighted the scene. There were no passing carriages, and no pedestrians. When he had turned into this street she, earnestly speaking, had turned with him mechanically, scarcely conscious of what she was doing. And so they sauntered on, in the dead of night, through that silent and deserted street of the crowded city, in a solitude as deep as in the desert.

When she had ceased speaking he said:

"Well! what of it all?"

"This," she said, speaking now with wonderful calmness and firmness; "you shall not marry this young lady."

"Indeed!"

"No, you shall not!"

"You cannot prevent it! If you attempt to give trouble I will have you arrested as an impostor.'

"I will not break any law! I will simply go to the Vansitart house and ask to see the young lady I will go early to-morrow, before she can go out. I will tell her all my story."

"She will not believe you."

"I will show her your photograph."

Gentleman Geff started.

"I will ask her to compare that with your living face."

Gentleman Geff felt in his pocket, drew something out, and stealthily handled it, keeping it out of the girl's sight.

"Then, I will show her your letters to me, and ask her to compare their handwriting with that of those which you have doubtless written to her."

"You will not do this!"

"As Heaven hears me I will do it, for it is my duty! I will do it as sure as I live!"

"Then you will not live!" fiercely muttered the man, as he sprang upon the woman like a wild beast, throttled her for a moment, while he hissed in her ear:

"You have hunted me to the earth! But tiger hunting has its deadly perils!"

With these words he plunged his knife into her bosom, up to the hilt, and threw her from him. She fell to the ground.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER THE CRIME

"It is fate," said Geoffrey Delamere, as he held the knife point downward, dripping on the pavement, and glanced fearfully up and down the street to see if any one were near. But the street was dark, silent and solitary as a desert in the night.

Only for a few seconds he stood there, then he stooped and dropped the knife through a grating on the pavement, heard it fall and jingle upon some metallic rubbish in the cellar beneath, and then arose, turned, glanced up and down the deserted street and hurried rapidly away.

He turned the first corner into Fifth Avenue and walked down as far as Forty-second Street. Then he turned into that street, and walked up to the Grand Central Railway Depot, entered the building and sat down as if waiting for a train.

So rapid had been his motions that not ten minutes had

elapsed between the moment that he struck the knife into the bosom of his victim and this moment that he stepped up to the watchman on duty and inquired:

"When is the Albany express due?"

The man glanced at the time-table, then at the clock, and answered:

"Due at half-past three. If she's up to time she will be here in twenty-five minutes."

Gentleman Geff sat down on one of the benches near the loitering watchman. The waiting room was almost deserted. The gas was low, the water coolers dry, the ticket office closed.

Perhaps the watchman was usually talkative by nature, or perhaps he felt the loneliness of the hour. At all events, he ventured to address the stranger.

"Expect friends by her, sir?" he inquired.

"By whom?" demanded the rather distracted Delamere.

"Waiting to meet anybody by this train, sir?"

Now Gentleman Geff did not expect to meet any one by this train. He was merely preparing an alibi in case of unforeseen accidents connected with that little transaction in that uptown cross street, and also making his intended application for rooms in a fashionable hotel seem in order at that unusual hour. For it will be remembered that he had not as yet engaged any, or even taken his baggage from the Custom House, but had dressed himself for the evening in his stateroom on the steamer, and on landing had taken a cab and driven first to Delmonico's, where he had dined, and thence to the Vansitart mansion, where he had spent a very long evening.

Coming away from Vansitart's, he had been followed and confronted by the poor girl who had hunted him down, brought him to bay, and been stabbed for her tiger hunting.

Now his purpose was to try to make it appear that he had come straight from the Vansitart house to the Grand Central Railway Depot, to wait for friends, and go with them to the favorite hotel. He did not expect to meet even an acquaintance, but if, as he supposed, his friends should not appear, he could mingle with the crowd that came out of the cars, get into a hotel stage with a party, and get rooms as a traveler just arrived.

He did not resent the questions of the watchman as an impertinence. On the contrary, he was glad they had been put. They gave him an opportunity of so emphasizing his assumed position as to impress it on the mind of one witness at least and make it memorable, in case of accidents connected with the transaction uptown.

So when the watchman inquired: "Waiting to meet any one by this train, sir?"—he answered:

"Yes; I have just returned from Europe by the *Scorpio*, have been spending a long evening at the Vansitart mansion, left there so late that I thought I would just come up here and meet the friends whose expected arrival in the city I saw announced in the evening papers. Is this the train coming in?" he inquired, as a rumbling rush shook the earth.

"No, sir; that is the freight train. She'll be here in ten minutes now, though."

"Ah! Have a cigar?" said Gentleman Geff, taking out his pocket case.

"Thanky for the cigar, sir, but they don't allow smoking here, sir," politely replied the watchman, as he received the "weed" from the hands of the donor.

"Not even at this hour, when the place is nearly deserted?"

"No, sir; but there's a smoking room; that's the door."

Gentleman Geff arose, crossed the floor and passed through the indicated portal into an apartment, where he lit his cigar, and walked and smoked until the rush and whirr of the coming-in train warned him to return to the waiting room.

He threw away his cigar, and went to meet the incoming tide of travelers.

Almost the first face he saw was that of the first friend he had met in New York, Mr. William Walter Walling, junior partner in the great firm of Walling & Walling, attorneys-at-law.

"Why! How do you do, Hay?"

"How do you do, Walling?"

These were simultaneous greetings as the men met and shook hands.

"Off to Saratoga, or Niagara, by the early train, I presume. But when did you arrive from London?"

"Only this evening, by the *Scorpio*," replied Gentleman Geff.

"And off to Canada, or some other cool latitude, by the early train."

Not at all. I shall not leave New York at present, warm as the city is."

"Attractions here too great, eh? Miss Leegh remains in town at the Vansitart house, I believe."

"Yes. I went to her almost directly from the steamship, and spent a long evening with her."

"You could have done no less, since the young lady remained in town to receive you on your return from abroad."

"Our engagement was announced weeks ago, before I sailed for England," Mr. Hay explained.

"Oh, I know, of course. And when I met you here and thought you were going off by the early train, I also thought that Miss Leegh had, after all, been driven out of the city by the heat, and had gone to her friends, wherever they may now be, and that you were off to join her."

"Oh, no. She is here, as I explained, and I have passed a long evening with her, went to her almost directly from the steamer, stopping only at Delmonico's for a little solitary dinner," said Gentleman Geff, repeating his first statement with the pertinacity of one who wishes to impress it on the memory of his hearer.

"Then how came you here?" inquired Will Walling.

"Came to meet you."

"To meet me?"

"Yes."

"But—how did you know I was returning to town by this train?" inquired the lawyer, staring.

"Saw your expected arrival announced in one of the evening papers; I forget which. Telegraphic news, you know," replied Gentleman Geff, lying without the slightest hesitation.

"News must be very scarce, since such a very insignificant item is telegraphed," remarked the lawyer.

"I don't see that, Walling. You are engaged for the defendant on the great case of Vanderblitzen versus Vanderblitzen, and your movements are watched with interest by counsel and people on both sides."

"There is something in that. But what brings you here to meet me at this unearthly hour, if one may ask so plain a question without rudeness?"

"I came to catch you on the wing. I, too, am a client of yours, though an almost forgotten one in the rush and tumult of your more important business."

"Not so, Hay! not so! But, really, I thought your own affairs were so well settled that you would require no further legal assistance, at least from us, on this side of the pond."

"My affairs are settled most satisfactorily. It is business connected with my marriage upon which I wished to see you, and to secure an hour's interview."

"Oh, these lovers! There are three classes of persons who are the torment and the revenue of the modern lawyer's life—betrothed lovers, wealthy widows and would-be divorcers! Where are you stopping?"

"Nowhere at present. Have I not told you that I went directly from the steamer to Delmonico's, from there to Vansitart's, and from there here?" replied Gentleman Geff, feeling pleased with the opportunity for reiterating his statement.

"Then come right home with me. A strong cup of coffee each will stand us both in good stead of a night's rest, and we can get through this business of yours in time for me to look over my brief before going into court to-day."

"Thank you very much, Walling; I will go with you. The case of Vanderblitzen versus Vanderblitzen comes on to-day, then?"

"Yes; adjourned from last Wednesday; may be adjourned again, for aught I know. I took advantage of the interim to run up to Saratoga and stay over Sunday and get a little fresh air."

As the two men talked, they had walked slowly through the building, and come out on the Forty-second Street front.

The old watchman who had talked with Gentleman Geff in the waiting room saw them pass out together, and said to himself:

"Ay, ay; he's met the friend he came so early to meet."

The private residence of the Wallings was on Thirty-eighth Street, within easy walking distance of Grand Cen-

tral Railway Depot. It was now daylight, and the eastern horizon was aflame with the rays of the rising sun. Milk carts, bread carts and other early supply carts, were on their way. Early workmen were passing to their places of labor. Night workmen were going home to their families. These were nearly all the passengers at this early morning hour, except the ever-passing street cars, stages and trucks.

The two men went along Forty-second Street to Fifth Avenue, turned down and walked on to Thirty-eighth Street, and then westward along that street until they reached a fine brownstone house, in a block of the same style of houses, and bearing on its polished silver door plate the name:

Walling.

"Come in. There's not a soul in the house, except the cook and the waiter. The family are all at Saratoga, where I should be, too, but for this *dunder und blitzen* case!" said Will Walling, as he took out a latchkey and let himself in, followed by Gentleman Geff.

"Come upstairs," he continued. "I will take you to a bedroom, where you can refresh yourself. Then I will ring and order strong coffee, to be followed by breakfast. And while it is getting ready I will take a bath and change my clothes. You may have a dip, too, if you like. There's a tub on every floor."

So saying, he opened the door of a spacious front room on the second floor and ushered his guest into it.

Then he went and opened the front windows, to admit the morning air and sunshine.

Then he turned to his guest, and got the first good look at him he had had since they had met in the morning twilight at the Grand Central Depot.

"Why, Hay, old boy, how pale and haggard you look! Are you feeling badly? Shall I get you anything?" he inquired, anxiously.

"No, no, to both questions. It is only the effect of late hours," replied the other; but he sank into the easy-chair that the lawyer had drawn forward for him.

"The effect of no hours at all, I think. This sitting up all night don't agree with you. You can't stand it as well as I do, I think. Don't try it again, old fellow, unless under absolute necessity, for you can't do it with impunity;

that is plain. You are sure you won't let me get you anything?"

"Thank you, nothing until the coffee is ready."

"I will go out and order it immediately. Meantime, you try a warm bath. That and a cup of strong Mocha will set you up again," said Walling, as he turned to leave the room.

Then, with his hand on the knob of the door, he added:

"If you should want anything, ring, and Aloysius will answer the bell and attend to you. Queer name for a hall boy—Aloysius—is it not? But we make it practicable by calling him Loy."

With these words he laughed and left the room, closing the door behind him.

Gentleman Geff arose, went across the room, and turned the key. Then he tottered back and sank into his seat, and dropped his face into his hands.

The question that had haunted him all night and morning since the doing of that dreadful deed pressed heavily on him now in his stillness and solitude.

"Have they found it yet? Is every one talking of the murder? How soon will it be heard of in this household? Are the police seeking for the murderer? Can they by any means find a clew?

"No; it is next to impossible. There was not a waking creature on the street. And it was done so deftly and silently. She expired without a groan. The stroke went home—home to her heart!

"Poor little devil! I am sorry for her; but she died a painless death, and, after all, that may have been better for her than a sorrowful life. Yet I wish she had not driven me to it.

"I did not mean to do it; but I was overwhelmed by a whirlwind of wrath and terror, and lost my reason. It was fate!" he said, sighing uneasily, shifting his position, and lifting his head from his hands.

"But what is this? Great Heaven!"

The heat of his forehead had softened some substance clinging to the finger of his right-hand glove. It was coagulated blood.

He threw out his eyes in speechless horror, but they met

the reflection of his ghastly face in the mirror on the dressing case before him.

Yes, there it was! The print of blood left by the index finger of the right gloved hand on the murderer's brow!

"The mark of Cain! The mark of Cain!" he cried. And, tiger as he was, he felt as if he were going mad.

He tore off the tight-fitting gloves, splitting them in many places as he wrenched and pulled at them.

When they were off he examined both. The left-hand glove had not a speck upon it, and had come off more easily than the right, and so had not been much torn. He threw that on the dressing case.

Then he looked around in an agony of anxiety to see where he could safely hide, or how he could entirely destroy, the right-hand glove—the bloody witness of crime. His glance fell on the register in the chimney.

And he tore up the glove with teeth and hands into separate fingers and strips of kid, and pushed them through the open bars of the register into the inferno below.

Then he hurried into the bathroom adjoining his chamber, took off his coat, and washed the blood from his forehead—washed it over and over again many times before he ventured to use a towel. Finally he dried his face and brushed his hair, and took up his coat and examined it with microscopic care. There was not a speck upon it. His trousers were submitted to the same ordeal, and were found without spot or blemish. Next his patent boots were scrutinized. Yes, there on the shining toe of the right boot was a little splash, like a flattened drop of dark red sealing wax.

He recognized and shuddered at it. He took some paper from a wall basket, wet it, and wiped off the stain. This process he repeated many times. Then he twisted up the wet paper in small morsels, and put them through the bars of the register, and sent them down after the glove.

Then he dressed himself carefully, and sank again into the armchair. He was still trembling with strong emotion—emotion that was every moment getting more and more beyond his control.

Suddenly he started up and rang the bell.

In a few moments some one came in answer to the summons, turned the handle of the door, and, finding it fast, knocked.

He got up and opened it.

A white boy of about fifteen years old, dressed as a page, opened it.

"Bring me a glass of brandy. I am not well," said Gentleman Geff.

The boy ducked his head and disappeared.

Gentleman Geff left the door open, and went and sank into his chair.

In a short time the boy returned to the room, bringing a pretty little service—a silver tray, on which stood a small cut-glass decanter of pure French brandy, a cut-glass jug of water, clear as crystal; a cut-glass plate of pounded ice, over which lay a silver teaspoon, and a fine, thin glass goblet.

He set the tray on a little stand, and lifted both and stood them beside the gentleman in the easy-chair.

"Now, sir, if you would like sugar and a lemon, or some crackers, or anything else, I can bring them immediately; but as you only said brandy——"

"I want nothing else, thank you," replied Gentleman Geff. "You can go."

The boy ducked again and disappeared.

The man of many aliases put a spoonful or two of ice in the goblet, filled it to the brim with brandy, stirred up the contents, and drank them down at a draught.

"It is truly *eau-de-vie*," he said, with a profound sigh of relief and satisfaction; and he sat back and enjoyed the effect of the stimulant.

"It was fate," he said. "In both instances, fate—the sacrifice in the wilderness of California, and the sacrifice in the street of the great, populous city—each a sacrifice, each a necessity—neither a murder!

"Yes, it was destiny! If I had been born a millionaire—if I were now a millionaire—no doubt I should never have taken human life, or wronged a human being, for it was never my will wantonly to do either.

"On the contrary, with millions at my disposal, I should have been a benefactor to my race. I should have endowed churches, hospitals and orphan asylums, and all that sort of thing. I know I should. It was in me to do it. But here am I——"

He stopped, put some more pounded ice in the goblet, filled it up with brandy, and emptied it at a draught.

"Here am I," he resumed, setting down the glass, "the victim of fate! Instead of being born the millionaire that would have evolved the philanthropist, I was born a poor devil of a gentleman, that has developed into nothing but a miserable victim of circumstances!"

He got up and walked the floor.

Presently the boy in buttons, Aloyisius, came again, and announced:

"If you please, sir, breakfast is on the table."

Gentleman Geff arose, looked at himself in the glass, thought he was all right, and followed the boy, who led him downstairs and into the breakfast room, where the lawyer sat with the morning *Trumpeter* in his hand.

"Anything new?" inquired Gentleman Geff, in as steady a tone as he could command.

"No; nothing special. Reports of a change of ministry in England, by way of foreign intelligence."

"And domestic news?"

"Oh, nothing but racing at Saratoga, trotting on Long Island, and yachting everywhere. Wall Street financial operations, and so forth."

"No—casualties?" inquired Gentleman Geff, in pure fatuity.

"Look here, Hay! Are you one of these Englishmen of whom it is said that he always wants his morning paper laid beside his plate, on the breakfast table because he likes to enjoy his murders with his muffins?" demanded the lawyer, laying down the paper and drawing up to the table. "Because if you are, you will be disappointed. I have not found the ghost of a murder in the morning papers. Come, draw up."

Gentleman Geff affected to laugh, drew his chair to the table, and sat down.

He drank the coffee set before him by Aloyisius, but partook very slightly of the buttered toast, rice waffles, fresh mackerel and tenderloin beefstead set before him.

Walling ate heartily, and, like too many very busy professional men, much too rapidly.

As they arose from the table, the lawyer said:

"Now I am at your service for an hour," and led his client into his study at the side of the house.

Gentleman Geff had really no business to transact, nor did he intend to make any settlements on his bride-elect; he only wanted an excuse for his untimely appearance at the Grand Central. But he could give the lawyer instructions for drawing up the deeds, and could make the amount as handsome as possible, as he never meant to sign the papers. He need not do so; he could "change his mind."

The lawyer wrote rapidly while his client dictated.

"Now these shall be engrossed and ready for signature in a day or two," said Mr. Walling, as he arose from his writing table.

"There is no particular hurry about that. I only wished you to take my instructions at once because I may be going out of town immediately, and may not have another opportunity."

"The weather getting too warm for you?"

"Rather. I shall try to persuade Miss Leegh to join her friends at Newport; and if she consents to do so I shall escort her there, and take rooms in the same hotel with her party."

"I see. Well, Hay, I have to go downtown. Make yourself quite at home. I shall be delighted to find you here when I return," said the lawyer, passing out into the hall, and taking his hat from the rack.

"You are very kind; but I also must go down into the city to look after my effects, which are still in the Custom House."

"Come along, then! And I hope you will return and dine with me. Why not send your baggage here, and be my guest until you go to Newport?" cordially inquired the lawyer.

"Thanks, very much. Should be delighted. Will think of it," replied the client.

They left the house and walked on to Fourth Avenue, where they took a down car to City Hall. The car was full, yet not crowded; the two men found seats.

The lawyer drew two morning papers from his pocket, handed one to his companion and opened the other himself.

Gentleman Geff feared to look at any part of his but the first few columns that contained the cable news.

He was pretending to read that, yet listening eagerly to the conversation of the passengers. In the intensity of his inward anxiety, and in his absorption in that one idea, he fell into the morbid mistake that all the city was thinking and talking of the dark deed that lay so heavily on his own conscience. He forgot that in the great and crowded city the finding of a poor, unknown girl's dead body would be but a small item in the news of the day.

No one spoke of such an event; in fact, there was but very little talk in the car, and it was of racing, trotting matches, mining shares, anything else—but—that.

"And yet the body must have been found very soon after——"

Gentleman Geff shuddered, and left the sentence in his thoughts unfinished.

Low down on Fourth Avenue Mr. Walling got off at the corner of the street leading to his office.

"See you at dinner," he said to Gentleman Geff, on leaving.

The man of many aliases rode on further and still further, passed the gloomy prison of the Tombs, and sickened at the sight of its heavy walls and closely grated windows, and at the thought of that inclosed yard within—the place of executions.

"What if—what if——" He shuddered away from the thought.

Oh, for the peace of those poverty-stricken days before he was tempted by greed of gold to crime! Oh, for the old peace!

A little further on he left the car, and entered a drinking saloon, not only for the glass of brandy that seemed an hourly necessity now, but to hear if——

In such places the thing would be more likely to be talked of than anywhere else, except in the police courts and quarters.

There were several loungers present, drinking and talking with animation, but their subject was a match that was to come off the next day between two noted boxers.

He called for his glass of cognac, tossed it off, laid down the price, and left the place.

He wandered around among the narrow, crowded streets of the lower section of the city, listening everywhere, but

never once did he hear—what he feared. Men's talk was of everything else but—that.

Later, he went to the Custom House, where he found his servant waiting for him.

"Ah! you are here, Clark! Did you find comfortable quarters last night?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir, in a tavern, 'ard by 'ere; and was on 'and 'ere as soon as the 'ouse was hopen."

"Any news down this way, Clark?"

"No, sir, none as would interest a gentleman like you. I 'ear as there is a dog fight to come off to-morrow be-tween——"

"Yes, I heard of that; and, as you say, it don't interest me."

Gentleman Geff got his baggage, and ordered it to be taken to an uptown hotel, where he directed his servant to meet him.

Then he called a cab and drove to the same destination.

On reaching the hotel he went to the office, engaged a room, and registered himself as:

Randolph Hay, Haymore, Yorkshire, England.

Then he bought a copy of each of the day's papers, and went up to his room, preceded by the porter with the key.

As soon as he was admitted, he dismissed his attendant, locked the door and sat down to search the papers, as he had not dared to do all day.

One after another he unfolded, and diligently searched without finding the fearful lines.

At length, however, in an obscure corner of an inside page of one paper, he found these head lines, and trembled:

"A Mystery—The Dead Body of an Unknown Girl Found on Quarry Street.

"As Patrolman Davis, of the —— Precinct, was passing on his beat down Quarry Street, at three o'clock this morning, he came upon the body of a young girl, lying in front of the disreputable house No. 31.

"She lay as if she had rolled over partly on her left side. Her right arm was thrown out upon the grating of the cellar door, palm downward and fingers slightly curved. Turning the bull's-eye of his dark lantern to bear upon this,

he saw that the fingers of the hand and the bars of the grating were slightly stained with blood.

"On further examination, he saw that the keen bright rays of the lantern struck something that glittered on the deep cellar floor under the grating, and in a line with the hand of the girl.

"Looking closer, he saw that this 'something' was a large clasp knife, with the blade open—apparently the very weapon with which the unhappy girl had slain herself, and which, as she rolled over in her death agony, had fallen from her hands, or which she had purposely dropped through the grating, into the cellar beneath.

"The girl is supposed to have been an inmate or a casual visitor of the house at whose door she was found. But the people there deny all knowledge of her. Nothing was found on her person by which she could be identified. The knife picked up from the cellar is in the possession of the police.

"The coroner has been notified. The police believe this to be a case of unquestionable suicide."

Gentleman Geff laid down the paper with a sigh of relief, and sat silent and motionless for some little time; then he muttered to himself:

"Of course it was suicide! What more can be made of it? It was really suicide. I never wished to hurt her, but with suicidal fatuity she followed me up and brought me to bay, and forced me to put her out of my way! It was she or I, one or the other, must be sacrificed, and—self-preservation is the first law of nature."

Gentleman Geff, having laid "this flattering unction to his soul," looked carefully through all the other papers to find further confirmation of this theory of suicide, but found no mention made of the "mystery."

"I fancy the *Trumpeter* is the only one that has it! The other morning papers had probably all gone to press before this news reached their offices."

For a while he seemed greatly relieved, but soon he grew troubled again.

"The body will be taken to the Morgue, after the inquest, and left there for recognition. Suppose some of her fellow passengers in the steerage of the steamer in which she came over, should be led by curiosity to visit the deadhouse and

identify the body, and should know where she had lodged, and direct the police to the place, and my letters and photograph should be found. Bah! A very extreme improbability. Besides, my letters were all signed Kightly Montgomery! And my photographs were all taken in the hussar's uniform and the military mustache. Not in the citizen's dress and full beard of to-day. I am morbid; I wish my trunks would come! Then I would dress, and go call on Miss Leegh!"

As if this wish had conjured up its fulfillment, there came a rap at his door, followed by the entrance of two porters bearing between them a heavy trunk. They set it down, received their fee, and departed.

"Send my servant up if he has arrived!" said Gentleman Geff to the men, as they left the room.

In a few minutes Clark entered to take orders.

"I am going out to spend the evening. Open my trunks and lay out a suit," said the master.

The man obeyed, and in twenty minutes more Gentleman Geff left the hotel, threw himself into a hansom cab, and drove to the Vansitart house.

Here he found Lamia Leegh in radiant beauty, and passed with her hours that made him forget, for the time being, the sin of his soul.

He did not look at any evening paper. If he had done so, his self-complacency would have been disturbed, for one and all of these journals contained a more or less true account of the tragedy of the preceding night, headed: "Attempted Suicide of a Beautiful Girl," or in similar sensational words, but ended in this correction:

"The young woman is not dead, however, as was erroneously stated in one of the morning papers that must have accepted a too hasty report of the case, but lies in a very precarious condition at Samaritan Hospital. She is too low to be questioned, or expected to give an account of herself."

But Gentleman Geff never saw this correction, and as it was the last that appeared in the papers about the victim, her would-be murderer lived in fancied safety.

He persuaded Miss Leegh to join her friends at Newport, which—as she had completed her trousseau, and had received her betrothed, for whom she had waited in the heat of the city—she was not loath to do.

She wrote to Mrs. Vansitart to ask if it would be agreeable to have her with them, and received a cordial invitation to join that lady's party.

So, within a few days, Miss Leegh, escorted by "Mr. Hay," embarked on one of the Sound steamers for Newport.

At the same hour of their embarkation a young woman —who had been found wounded on a sidewalk of the city and taken to the Samaritan Hospital, several days before, and who now, in answer to questions, faintly whispered that her name was Jane Montgomery, and that she was married—gave birth to a female infant.

CHAPTER XIX

AN EMBARRASSING DISCOVERY

THE same evening that saw the betrothed lovers leave for the fashionable seaboard town found a recently married pair of young people seated on the piazza at Lull's, in the Pine Mountains.

They were our dear Cleve Stuart and his small wife, Palma.

They had just finished tea, and had come out to enjoy the rich afterglow of the sunset on the river far below them, the fragrant terebinthine odor of the pines brought out by sun and dew, and the freshness of the evening breeze that came down from the mountain tops.

They sat side by side, very happy, very thoughtful, he clasping her small hand in his own.

There were other guests of the house out on the long piazza, and on the lawn before it, and in the woods beyond; but there were none near the young pair.

Cleve had grown to be, if not really in love with his lovely little wife, at least very well satisfied with her.

Palma had improved in health and strength and beauty. There was no question of her perfect recovery.

Cleve was very affectionate to her; and now, as they sat together, he was tenderly caressing the small hand that he held,

"Little girl," he said presently, "do you really think you love me?"

"Oh, Cleve!"

"When did you first begin to love me, Palma?"

"I don't know. I think I always did, even before I knew it myself, or knew that you existed, for when I first met you in Mrs. Barrn's garden, oh! I felt so perfectly contented, Cleve; as if I never should want anything more in the world but to see you every day. But you know all about that. I was a little child then, and you were almost a young man. The feeling has never changed, Cleve, except to grow deeper and deeper. Ah! what can I do for you, my own beloved Cleve! what can I do for you in return for the content you give me?" she said, lifting her hand and pressing it to his heart.

"Love me, dear child. You were made to love," he answered, softly.

"But I want to do something; I want to do something."

"What do you wish to do for me, dear Palma?"

"Oh, I don't know. Something like this, if I could—bring you a great fortune, make you a great king, or—die to save you from trouble and give you happiness!"

"Palma," he said—but his voice broke down a little—"do you know you are talking a great deal of nonsense, child?"

"Am I?" she slowly inquired. "Well, but you asked me if I loved you. And I answered yes; but, oh! oh! how I long to prove how much!"

The laugh and talk of several people coming in from the lawn toward them interrupted this little *tête-à-tête*.

They got up as by a simultaneous impulse and walked to the other end of the piazza.

"Dear," said Cleve, as they stood leaning over the banisters, "I shall have to leave you to-morrow."

"To leave me!" she echoed in dismay.

"But only for a few hours, dear."

"But why?"

"To go down to the city to do a little business."

"What business, Cleve?"

"To get a little money."

"Oh! but why can't you write a check?"

"A check would not do in this instance, dear. I—I—I have to sell some property," replied Cleve, evasively,

for he did not wish her to know how poor he was and what sacrifices he made.

She looked at him intently for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"How selfish I am, after all—I who was just saying how much I would like to do for you, when I am put to the test, am not willing even to let you leave me for your own pleasure, a single day!"

"But, dear, it is not for pleasure, it is on business," he exclaimed.

"And I would have hindered your business! But go, Cleve! Go, my dear Cleve! You have not left me for a day since you married me, but have stayed here in this place, that charming as it is to me always, must be often very dull to you, as I hear it said that it is to other gentlemen."

"I have never found it dull, Palma."

"But go to the city to-morrow, and if you can enjoy yourself in any way there, please do. Go to your club, and to the opera, if there is any, and never mind if you don't come back until Tuesday! Poley will take care of me. Will you, now, Cleve? Will you go and enjoy yourself just as if you were a single man and there was no such person as I? Oh, Cleve, I don't want to be a hindrance to you in anything you wish to do. I want only to be a happiness as far as I can."

"You foolish child, I am not going because I find this place dull—because I do not find it so; nor to seek pleasure in the city. I go to transact business, and shall return as soon as possible; before night certainly. And now tell me what I shall bring you from Vanity Fair?" he inquired, with his arm about her waist.

"Your own dear self, Cleve! I want nothing in the world else!" she answered.

"I shall leave by the seven o'clock down train."

"Very well, Cleve! I will get up to breakfast with you. You will give the order to-night."

"Yes, and as we must rise early we had better now retire."

They went to their room, found that Poley had set it in order for the night, and had turned the light of the lamp low.

Palma sank down on her easy-chair.

Cleve closed the wire shutters and turned up the light. Then he went to his large trunk, knelt down, unlocked and opened it.

"What are you doing, dear?" inquired Palma.

"Looking for something."

"What?"

"A—a little box."

"And can't you find it?"

"No, it does not seem to be in the trunk, and it is not so small as to be overlooked, either. Have you seen it, Palma? —a mahogany, silver-bound box, with a silver plate on the top bearing my monogram?" he anxiously inquired.

"I have never seen it but once—the day your trunk arrived, two months ago, when I stood by Mrs. Pole while she unpacked the trunk and took out all your clothes and put them in the bureau drawers and wardrobe."

"And not since?"

"No, it was left in the trunk, with some bundles of papers and other things, and Poley locked the trunk, and gave you the key. I saw her do it, and I have not seen the box nor trunk opened since."

"It is very strange," muttered Stuart.

"I hope it is not a serious loss," said Palma, uneasily.

"It's an inconvenient one, dear," replied Cleve, in a tone of assumed cheerfulness.

"Oh! Some papers, perhaps."

"It may not be gone—only mislaid," remarked Cleve, unwilling to distress her with the knowledge of his great loss, and the embarrassment it would cause.

He closed and locked the trunk, and stood up with a look of dismay. If the diamonds were gone, how should he pay his debts, and provide for his delicate wife, until he could find remunerative employment? And if gone, how could they have gone? How could his keys have been abstracted from his pocket, the trunk opened, the box purloined, the trunk closed again, and the keys returned to his pocket? How and when, by day or night, could this have been accomplished? While he and his wife slept? While they were at their meals? While they were out walking? It was a mystery that would require the skill of a sharp detective even to find a clew to it.

He passed his hand across his forehead, as if to clear his brow, and then went and drew out the bureau drawers to search them, mechanically, without the slightest hope of finding what he sought—nor did he find it.

"Let me help you! It may be on the wardrobe shelves," said Palma, starting up.

"How should it be there? How should it be anywhere but in the trunk where I left it, and where it is not!" said Stuart, with a deep sigh, as he locked the last drawer and turned from the bureau.

"I will look, though! One cannot tell," persisted Palma, going toward the wardrobe.

"No, dear; sit down. You must not fatigue yourself. I will search," said Stuart, with a frown, not for her, but for the missing jewels.

He made a thorough search, not only of the wardrobe, but of the washstand, the side tables and the center-table drawers, the big vases on the mantelpiece, and all over the floor. In fact, he worked on the square inch principle, yet found not what he searched for.

"It is not in this room! That is clear!" he said, giving up the search and dropping into a chair.

"Cleve, when did you see the box last?" inquired Palma, in a distressed tone.

"About a month ago. I have not had occasion to open the trunk since. But don't worry yourself, dear."

"Perhaps Poley might have seen it?"

"Not likely! But where is Mrs. Pole?"

"With her friends and gossips, the housekeeper and waitresses. They have a good time together, every evening after their work is done. Poley always helps them to set the tables for breakfast; that is the last thing they do at night. And then they go to the housekeeper's room and have a little supper all to themselves."

"What a child this wife of mine is, to be chattering about housemaids, when diamonds worth thousands are lost! But she doesn't know that, poor baby!" thought Cleve Stuart, as he looked at her.

"Shall I go and fetch Poley?" she inquired.

"No, dear; I will ring and send for her," replied Stuart.

He did so at once.

Mrs. Pole soon came in.

"Poley!" exclaimed Palma, eagerly, beginning the conversation, "do you remember that day, about two months ago, when you unpacked Mr. Stuart's traveling trunk, while I stood by you?"

"Sat by me, dear, on your resting-chair—sat by me! You could no more a-stood through all that unpacking at that time than a six-wecks-old baby! You's stronger now," said Mrs. Pole, chuckling.

"'Sat' by you, then. But you remember the day?"

"Of course, child. What would ail me to forget it?"

"Do you remember seeing a little wooden box?"

"A mahogany box, about six inches long and four inches wide and as many deep, bound with silver bars, and with a silver plate on the top? Yes, I remember it perfectly."

"Did you take it out, Poley?"

"No, ma'am. Don't you know, I asked you if we were to take that out also and put it on one of the tables for an ornament, and you said 'No, no; it might contain valuable papers, and must be left in the trunk and locked up.' And so we did leave it there, and locked the trunk and gave the key to Mr. Stuart."

"Oh, yes, I know; so we did. And I have not seen the box since. Have you, Poley?"

"Not a glimpse of it. Why? Is it missing?"

"Yes," said Mr. Stuart. "But say nothing whatever about it. The matter must be kept a secret for the present between us three. If there is to be any hope of recovering the box, nothing whatever must be said about it, but the affair must be quietly put in the hands of a detective."

"Is it so valuable as all that, sir?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Pole.

"Its loss is very inconvenient just at this time," evasively replied Stuart.

"Yes, indeed. I know to my cost how ill convenient it is to lose valuable papers sometimes. I had to pay a bill twice over to the corner grocery because I had lost the receipt. And that same pinched me the whole winter," said Mrs. Pole, who was possessed with the idea that the missing casket contained important documents. "But are you sure it is gone, sir? Have you looked everywhere?" she inquired.

"Everywhere except in Mrs. Stuart's cologne bottles and boots," replied Cleve, with grim humor.

"Oh, dear me! I am very sorry!"

"That will do, Poley, dear. We won't keep you up any longer, for we must go to bed, too; because Mr. Stuart has to take the early train for New York to-morrow," put in Palma.

"Going to the city!" exclaimed the woman.

"Only for a few hours. Shall be back by tea time," Cleve explained, and added:

"You will take excellent care of my wife while I am gone?"

"Trust me for that, sir. I took excellent care of her before you came," said Mrs. Pole. And then she bade the young pair good-night and left the room.

Cleve Stuart could not sleep that night Keen anxiety kept him awake. The mystery of the robbery, the uncertainty of the future, preyed upon his mind.

He felt willing to take any employment now—even a coachman's or a butler's place, if no better could be found, to support the fragile young life for which he had made himself responsible—yes, even a coachman's or a butler's place, so that she might never know it and be distressed by the knowledge—the coachman's place, however, in preference to the butler's, since he would rather drive horses than pass dishes—an unreasonable prejudice, yet a strong one.

He had one valuable piece of property left—his watch—which had also been his father's before him. It was a timepiece of finest workmanship and perfect accuracy, inclosed in a heavy hunting case, and with a monogram in rare rubies. It had cost seven hundred and fifty dollars. He might pawn this for one hundred dollars, perhaps for more. With this money he would be able to stave off starvation until he could get employment.

After a sleepless night he arose at six o'clock to prepare for his journey to New York.

Palma was still sleeping. She had slept like a child through the night, and he would not now disturb her.

There was always a half-past six o'clock breakfast for the men who had to go down to the city by the seven o'clock train. For the first time since his arrival at Lull's he joined that early party at the table, and had to go through

a course of "chaffing" about the honeymoon being over at last, and business asserting its claims, and so forth.

He took it all very good-humoredly, and, when he had finished his meal, left the table, and went back to his room to take leave of Palma.

He found her awake and ready to rise, with Mrs. Pole in attendance on her.

"Oh, Cleve! to think, after all, I should have overslept myself! Why didn't you wake me?" she inquired.

"You have not slept beyond your usual time, dear. And I thought it best to let you sleep on. Now don't get up. Lie still, and rest. I am going this moment. There is the stage full of men, and waiting for me to crowd them. Good-morning, dear little Palma."

And he kissed her many times and left the room.

CHAPTER XX

JUDY'S CHARGE

JUDY gazed down in distress and perplexity on the beautiful dark eyes, which were looking, in vacancy, up to her face.

"Oh, me darlint! me darlint! why don't ye spake till me? Don't ye know yer own thrue gurrul, that have come all the way from Grizzly to find ye? Och, then spake till me, Ran," she pleaded, laying her hand on his head.

" 'As darkness shows us worlds of light—
We never saw by day,' "

crooned the boy, in a low, dreamy tone.

"Och, thin, he's out av his head entirely. And is he always this-a-way, sir?" she inquired, almost ready to break down with fear and grief.

"Not always; but often. Do not be alarmed, however. He is doing very well. He will get over this. It is only a question of time," replied the surgeon.

"And are ye sure he'll come right, sirr?"

"Reasonably sure. It is only a question of time," repeated the surgeon.

"Of how much time?" persisted Judy.

"Ah! that we cannot tell you."

"Days, weeks, months, years? Oh, sirr, tell me something!"

"It may be days or weeks; scarcely a month, I should think."

"And may I have lave to bide and nurse him?"

The surgeon hesitated.

"Sure, sirr, Ran and me—we be swatcharrts, engaged to be married," persisted Judy, crimsoning with modesty, yet determined to gain her point. "Yis, sirr; and if the praist had only asked the blissing upon us, sure nobody would a-hindered me from tending me own bhoy. Say, sirr, may I?"

"Miss Judy," replied the surgeon, with a smile, "you are over young for a hospital nurse, and I doubt if you have had much experience in that line of usefulness."

"Oh, hevn't I, thin, sirr? Sure, and didn't I come from Grizzly itself? And ain't the min there everlastingly gitting their heads broke or cut or something? And no docther to the fore, and me the only woman, forbye two half Injun bastes that don't know nothing? Sure, it's plenty av exparience I've had in broken heads, and broken bones, too," eagerly explained Judy.

"Very well. But this is not only a question of skill and knowledge, it is a question of propriety; and I think I will have to submit it to a lady."

"Oh, thin, sure, if it is to a leddy, a rale leddy and not an imeetation leddy, I'm not affeard. A rale leddy will let me tind me bhoy?"

"Then do you remain here while I go and speak to the colonel's wife," said the surgeon, as he handed a chair to the girl, who then seated herself beside the bed of the wounded man.

The surgeon left the room. At the outer door he found Longman, still with Judy's Tip.

"Whose's dog is that?" inquired the doctor.

"He belongs to the girl inside. And a time I've had keeping him here. If I hadn't made his acquaintance on the road, and given a good impression by feeding him when he was half famished, I don't think I could hold him now," answered Longman.

The surgeon passed out, crossed the court to the colonel's quarters, where he found the family just about to sit down to tea.

With the frankness of frontier fort life, he accepted the lady's invitation to join them, and took the place which was prepared for him at the table.

"And how is your interesting young charge, doctor?" inquired Mrs. Moseley, as she handed him a cup of pekoe.

"Getting better slowly—very slowly," replied the surgeon, taking the cup with a bow of acknowledgment.

"We may be very thankful that he is mending instead of dying," observed the lady.

"I have a question to submit to you, madam."

"A question? What is it?"

"A young woman has arrived at the fort this afternoon. She says she comes from Grizzly, and is engaged to be married to young Hay. She asks to be permitted to nurse him. Now, the question I have to submit to you is this: Would it be proper to allow her to do so?"

The colonel's wife hesitated, paused to reflect, and then answered:

"That will depend very much upon what sort of a girl she is. I must see her and speak to her before answering your question or giving my opinion. Did young Hay recognize her?"

"He! No, indeed. He recognizes no one yet."

"I will walk over with you after tea, and see the poor girl. What do you think, colonel?" inquired Mrs. Moseley, appealing to her husband.

Now Col. Moseley commanded the fort, but was in turn commanded by his wife. So he answered:

"I think your idea a very good one, my dear."

When they arose from the table Mrs. Moseley threw a light shawl around her head and shoulders, and calling her twelve-year-old boy to go with them, joined the surgeon in his walk back to the hospital.

Longman and the dog had disappeared from the door of the surgeon's quarters. As they afterward found out, Longman had procured a chain and chained the dog up, and left the fort to return to his hut.

Dr. Hill took the two visitors up to the ward in which the wounded man lay.

Judy still sat by his side.

She looked up, and on seeing the lady, arose and courtesied, and stood waiting.

"How do you do? Don't disturb yourself. Resume your seat," said Mrs. Moseley, kindly, as she came to the side of the patient and took a second chair which the surgeon brought to her.

Ran had fallen into a deep sleep.

The surgeon looked down at him for a little while, and then said, in a low tone, to the lady:

"I think, madam, if you wish to speak to this young girl, it would be well that both of you should retire to my parlor, as talking here might disturb the poor fellow's rest. I will remain by his side until you return."

"Thank you, doctor. You are quite right. Come, child," she said, laying her hand on Judy's shoulder. "Come, Aleck," she added, beckoning her son.

And then, attended by the boy and girl, she led the way to the surgeon's little parlor.

"Now, 'Leck," she said to the boy, "you may go out and wait for me. I wish to talk to this young person alone."

The boy ran off, and the lady, followed by Judy, passed into the doctor's room.

Mrs. Moseley sat down on the sofa, and signed to Judy to come and sit beside her.

But Judy, finding herself alone with the lady, only clasped her hands and fixed her eyes imploringly on the lady's face, and pleaded:

"Oh, madam! sure, the good docther says it will be just as ye plaise. And, sure, ye will plaise to let me sthay wid me poor Ran and nurse him. Sure, and we are engaged this year and more, and it only naids the praist's blissing, and no one would have the right to part us."

"My poor child, I see no objection to your staying with and nursing your betrothed—under certain restrictions, of course," gently replied the colonel's wife.

"Oh, may the Lord bliss ye, ma'am, for a kind leddy!" warmly responded Judy.

"Now sit down, and tell me all about yourself and your lover. I knew young Hay when he was a little boy. His parents were in good circumstances then, and lived in San Francisco."

"And nivir dhramed their son would ivir let himself down to the likes av me. Och! but he had misfortins since thin, leddy. But now good fortin has come to him again, let him only live to enjoy that same."

"He will live. But now tell me all about him, and about yourself as well," said Mrs. Moseley, who naturally took it for granted that the good fortune alluded to by Judy was in the only shape in which it ever came to a miner—gold ore.

Judy frankly told her whole story, concealing nothing—not even her own and her twin brother's fatherless, motherless, friendless and nameless condition when they were left in the basket at the door of the Hospital of the Holy Maternity, or her years of servitude with her hard taskmistress, or her wanderings with her brother until they drifted into Grizzly, where they were received and sheltered and provided for by Ran Hay, until, as she expressed it, they "could turn round"—that is, find work and settle themselves.

Then she spoke glowingly of Ran Hay, of his benevolence, generosity and hospitality, of how, soon after he had befriended her brother and herself, he had taken in a fine English gentleman and given him free board and lodging for months and months.

She told how, on the first day of that current month of April, Ran Hay had found out through an advertisement in a newspaper, that he was "nixt av kin to a great estate in old England." How Ran and herself had talked over the new condition and agreed that after he should have taken possession of his property, he and she should each go to school—he to college, she to a girl's academy—and prepare for the position they were to occupy, and then that they should get married and go to live at Haymore, the patrimonial estate of the Hays in Yorkshire.

She related how, on the second day of April, at sunrise, Ran Hay had started from Grizzly for San Francisco, taking with him his pile of gold ore and his packet of documents, and accompanied by Gentleman Geff, the Englishman whom he had befriended.

And she told of the warning "dhrame" she had on the night after Ran's departure, of her resolution to follow him, of her journey through the wilderness, attended by her dog Tip; of her night's sleep in the hollow oak tree, guarded by

Tip; of her next morning's adventure with the wolves, defended by Tip; of her fatigue, hunger, thirst and faintness, when she was found by the hunter Longman; of her discovery, through the hunter's story, that her lover lay wounded at this fort.

"And noo I have found him, dee-ar leddy, ye will say nought agin' me sthaying to nurse him?"

"No, I will not. You shall stay with your betrothed—under certain restrictions," said Mrs. Moseley.

Judy seized her hand and kissed it.

"You shall have a little room and a little bed to yourself in our quarters. It would not be proper that you should sleep here in the hospital, where there are no other women."

Judy caught the lady's hand and kissed it again, as she added:

"You and meself knows that right; but sure it is little shlape I ixpict to get till me Ran is oot av danger."

"He is out of danger, my girl."

"Till he comes to himself, thin."

"That will not be long, I hope. You must not deprive yourself of sleep with no benefit to him. But tell me this—were they important documents the young man had with him when he was shot?"

"O-o-o-h!" cried Judy, shuddering at the lady's last word. "Sure they was all the papers that was nicissary to prove himself was himself, lagal and lawful, and nixt av kin to the great istate."

"Do you think, Judy, that the adventurer who accompanied him could have been his assailant?"

"The—which—ma'am—plaise?" inquired Judy, utterly perplexed by the lady's words.

"Do you think the man who started to walk with Ran from Grizzly to 'Frisco, could have been the one who shot and robbed him?" inquired the lady, amending her speech.

"Och, no, ma'am, sure! It's little luve I have for Gentleman Geff, meself! And little faith in him, more betoken! But I don't belaive he could be a robber and a murtherer! No, indade! He's too nice and clane, and too soft-spoken, and too much of a rale gentleman, for that," said Judy, with the utmost earnestness.

For you see all the robbers and murderers of whom the girl had ever heard were "redskins" or "borderd ruffians,"

not dainty gentlemen in spotless linen, broadcloth and kid gloves.

"Then who on earth could have done the deed?" mused the lady, half aloud.

"Injuns, I reckon," said Judy.

"And what could have become of that other man, since he has never turned up, and never been heard of, dead or alive?" still mused the lady.

"Dee-ar knows!" sighed Judy, with despair of solving that problem. "A many things may have happened to him and we nivir know av it. He may have run away and been chased and killed at a distance from where Ran fell; or if so be he was killed near the same spot, his body may have been carried off by the Injuns. Or else eaten up by the wolves or the painters—but thin they wad have found that oot! Meself reckons he was carried off by Injuns!"

"And these important documents of which he was robbed," said the lady, speaking more to herself than to her hearer. "But, oh! of course they could have been only attested copies from registers."

"Oh, yis!" exclaimed Judy, "the dockermints was only copied from the copybooks. And, oh! isn't it lucky, ma'am, that me poor Ran brought only the copies instead av the copybooks?"

"Very well," assented the lady, with a smile.

After a while Mrs. Moseley arose, and said:

"Now, my good, little Judy, I will take you back to your Ran, and you may sit by him until ten o'clock; then the night watch will be appointed, and Dr. Hill will send you, in charge of an orderly, to our quarters, where I will give you lodgings. You will do as I tell you, child. It is the only condition under which you can be permitted even to help to nurse your betrothed."

"Oh, ma'am, sure it's an ungrateful baste av a divil I'd be intirely if I didn't mind iviry word that dhraps from your lips! But plaise tell me how sune I may kim to me Ran the mornin'?"

"As soon as you have breakfasted. Come, now, it is but eight o'clock. You have two more hours left to sit by him to-night."

"Yis—blissid be the saints, and thank yerself, ma'am," said Judy, as she followed her conductress from the room.

Mrs. Moseley led the way back to the ward, where they found Ran still calmly sleeping.

"He has not moved for an hour," said the doctor, as he got up and resigned his post to Judy.

"And is it a good sign sure, docther, dee-ar?" inquired Judy.

"An excellent sign."

Mrs. Moseley then took leave, and went out, calling her son to attend her.

Judy sat and watched the sleeper, and prayed to the Virgin, and to all the saints, for his restoration to health and strength.

The surgeon had told her that if the sleeper awoke, she must send a message to him by the old soldier who sat in the hall on the outside of the ward door.

But Ran never stirred, while Judy sat and held his hand.

At ten o'clock the surgeon entered the ward, came up to the side of the bed, nodded to Judy, took the hand that she held, felt the pulse of the patient and looked in his sleeping face. Then he said to the young nurse:

"He is doing well, my child. You can go now. Mossop, the old soldier outside, has orders to see you across to the colonel's quarters."

Judy arose, courtesied her thanks, and left the ward.

Old Mossop, who was seated on a bench outside, touched his bald forehead by way of salutation, and followed her downstairs and out of the building.

The lights were still burning in the colonel's quarters when they reached the front door, which was opened by an orderly.

All the colonel's girls and boys had retired for the night, but the colonel and his wife sat at a little table in the center of the parlor; she—whisper it not in the fashionable circles of the Eastern cities, though it is true, for I know it of my own personal knowledge—she, the colonel's wife, darning the family stockings; he—but I don't expect to be believed in this assertion—he, reading a very old-fashioned book—the family Bible.

He closed the book and laid it reverently on the table. She drew the little red stocking upon which she had been at work off her hand, and both stood up to receive the newcomer.

They could not be called a very handsome-looking pair as they stood there, but they were a wholesome, pleasant, satisfatcory-looking pair.

He was a man of fifty, rather stout, rather bald, with kind blue eyes and a pleasant smile. He wore his faded blue uniform with the tarnished straps, which he wore all day long in the house or out of the house, on duty or off duty. It was a matter of economy with the father of eleven children, all of them under eighteen years of age. He really could not afford a dressing gown any more than his wife could afford a seamstress.

She was a small, slight woman, with a dark complexion, dark hair parted in the middle of a high forehead, and rippling down in little crinkling wavelets to her temples, and thence carried backward and wound with the thick black hair into a soft coil at the nape of her neck. It needed daylight to show the few silver threads that mingled with the dark tresses. Her eyes were the charm of her face, they were so dark, and deep, and glowing with good will to all; they were fringed with long, black lashes and arched with low, black brows. She wore a brown alpaca so well repaired that it did not show its age, and plain linen collar and cuffs.

"This is the young girl of whom I spoke, colonel," she said, presenting Judy.

"I am glad to see you, child. You were a brave little girl to come so far alone to find your friend," he said.

Judy courtesied and blushed, and blushed and courtesied again, but she found no word to say in her bashfulness, for to her the colonel commandant of the fort was such an awfully great personage.

"Come, you are tired. I will show you where you are to sleep," said Mrs. Moseley, taking a lighted candle from the mantelpiece and beckoning the girl to follow her.

Judy courtesied to the colonel, and left the room with the lady.

"All our apartments are on the ground floor, which is a blessing," said Mrs. Moseley, as she moved on down the middle passage toward the rear of the house.

"Yes, ma'am," was all that Judy found to answer.

"Your room is next to the nursery, and so you need not

be afraid," said the lady, as she opened the door of what seemed an annex to the back of the house.

"Sure, ma'am, I would nivir be afeard in the good fort itself with the great colonel and all the brave sojers to purtect us. No, sure, not be afeard av all the red Injuns in the wurruld," replied Judy, who found her tongue as she followed her benefactress into the daintiest, prettiest little doll's house ever seen!—the like of which she had never dramed of in her life!—the like of which, perhaps, could not be found anywhere else on the planet, except in a lady's apartments of some officer's quarters in a Southwestern frontier fort. I say Southwestern, because the climate further north would not tolerate the existence of such a bandbox for a bed-chamber.

It was so unique that it is worth a description.

It was a little annex to the rear of the colonel's quarters, hastily built of boards, and fitted up with just such material as the post trader could furnish for the accommodation of a young lady friend from New Orleans, who had, on the previous year, announced her intention of coming to spend a few weeks of the summer with the colonel's wife.

It was a little case, just six feet square. Its board walls were covered with pale pink paper cambric. Its one window of four small panes—which was opposite the door and over the bed—was curtained with white net, tied back with strips of pink cambric. One-half the room was taken up by the bed, which was covered with a white counterpane and veiled with a pink mosquito net. There was no other article of furniture in this box but a small washstand, covered with pink and white drapery, and surmounted by a little shelf, on which stood a pincushion and a small looking-glass, all veiled and festooned with white net, tied up with pink strips, and one little resting-chair, ingeniously constructed of a barrel cut into shape, fitted with a seat, stuffed with hay, and covered and draped with pink and white calico.

Judy paused on the threshold and gasped for breath. Not the splendors of Aladdin's palace could have stricken the log-hut girl with more dumb admiration than this rosy bower, that looked, indeed, less like an open bedchamber than a magnified opening rose. She was afraid to set foot

in it, much more to dream of such a desecration as to sleep in it.

"Go in, child," said the lady.

"Oh! oh! oh! oh! I—I—must go in there? I should sile the pretty place!" said Judy, looking down at her black cloth basque, blue linsey skirt and coarse shoes.

"Nonsense, child! Go in. It is late. You should be in bed," said the lady. And then she herself entered, and set the candle and candlestick in the wash basin for safety, and left the room.

"Slip the bolt after me, Judy. Good-night," she said, as she passed out of sight.

Judy closed and bolted the door, according to orders. It was some time before she could reconcile the act of going to bed in that pink shell, with her idea of the fitness of things.

She took off her coarse upper clothing, folded it and laid it on the floor—not for the world would she have laid it on the dainty chair. Her underclothing was as clean as need be.

"I feel just as if I was inside of a rosy cloud," she said, as she got between the sheets under the pink mosquito net.

But she was very tired, and so she soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXI

MIKE'S MAD CHASE

No-Man's Mike returned to his log cabin very late on the night of the day of Judy's departure. He had lingered longer than usual at the shaft that afternoon. Then on his way home he had been beguiled into "Ben's Bower," where he had loitered away the evening, talking with a lot of loafers over the mining topics of the day—the promising "strikes," or finds, the failures, the successes, and so on; and especially of Ran Hay's sudden accession to fortune and his departure for 'Frisco, accompanied by Gentleman Geff, en route for the East to claim his inheritance.

They all agreed that it was "jolly good-natured in Gent" to go with Ran. Two were safer than one could be in going through the wood, now that the redskins were abroad again.

Mike lingered long into the evening—not drinking nor

gambling, as were many of the others—for he seldom indulged in either dissipation—but smoking and listening, and occasionally putting his word in the conversation. His conscience reproached him for not going home to Judy, whom he believed to be waiting for him in their cabin; but Mike hated gloom, and he feared that he should find Judy fretting after Ran.

At last the clock struck ten.

At that hour, it will be remembered, Judy was thirty miles off, fast asleep in the hollow oak tree, guarded by Tip.

But Mike, who had no suspicion that she had left Grizzly, and thought that she was alone in her cabin, jumped upon his feet, and shouted:

"Sure it's a baste I am to be laving my swishter all this time, and I fale like throwing stones at meself for that same!"

And he hurried away.

When he reached his own cabin he found all there dark, still and silent. He called:

"Judy!"

But there was no answer.

"She's gone to bed," he said to himself, and then again, in a higher key, he called:

"Judy!"

Still there came no response.

"The craychur is fast aslape, and no wonder," he reflected. And then he raised his voice, and shouted:

"Judy!"

When the echo, which was his only answer, died away, he grumbled:

"Och, but she's the champion slaper, so she is! Hooly mither! how she can slape when she gives her whole mind till it!"

Then he groped his way to the shelf where the match box lay, struck a light, lit a candle and looked around.

The blanket hung down before Judy's sleeping place as it always hung when the girl was in bed. If Mike had looked behind that blanket, he would have seen that Judy was not there; but in all the days and nights that he and his sister had lived together in that room Mike had never once raised that veil. His sister's privacy was as sacred to him as that of a queen.

He looked at the hanging blanket, believing that she was behind it, while, in fact, as we know, she was at that time sound asleep in a hollow tree thirty miles away.

"Poor gurrul! She didn't slape much last night. Sure she's making up for that same to-night," said Mike, as he turned away.

Then he set the candle down on the table, and noticed at the same time that Judy had left his supper there ready for him, but cold.

Mike took a three-legged stool, drew it to the table, and seated himself. Then he took off his hat and put it under the table—instead of going and hanging it on its accustomed peg, to which he would have found pinned Judy's note, explaining her absence; but Mike was fated not to learn the fact that night.

In perfect peace of mind, he made a hearty supper of cold bacon and bread, washed down with cold tea. Then he blew out the candle and went to bed and to sleep, "innocent of the knowledge" that Judy was far away from the cabin, away from the camp and spending the night in a hollow tree in the midst of the wilderness, guarded by her dog.

Mike slept the sleep of the just until he was awakened in the morning by the sun shining through a chink in the wall full upon his upturned face and under his eyelids.

It was usually blithe Judy who was up first in the morning, and whose songs or whose movements aroused her brother.

But now it was the risen sun.

"Och! Ohone! what's the maning av this, and meself slaping the blissid sunlight away! And the fire not kindled! And Judy not to the fore! Gone to fetch wood and wather to git the breakfast for the two av us, and me slaping like a log! Och, Mike Man, be afther throwing stones at yourself for a brute baste!" muttered the young fellow, as he hurriedly dressed himself.

Then, as he crossed the earthen floor, on his way out, his eyes fell on the little note pinned to the wall. It was very conspicuous, the light from the open doorway, where there was no door, falling full upon it. It had an uncanny look—almost a ghostly look! Indeed, everything had

seemed uncanny, if not really spectral, since Mike's return to his cabin on the evening previous.

Mike's heart went down "like a bucket in a well," as he described it.

He went and took down that note and read it, and let it drop from his hands.

"Saints av Hivin!" he cried. "She's bin gone ivir since yistiddy morning! And what has happened till her in the manetime? Och! Judy, ye have bruck the harrt av me! I must folly on her track immadiate! I must! I must!"

While Mike was—metaphorically—tearing his hair, an old miner came in hurriedly, exclaiming:

"Judy, darlint, will be lind me the loan av a m—— Mither av Moses! Mike Man, whativir has come till ye?" he demanded, cutting short his request at the sight of the young man's woe-begone face.

He—the early visitor—was a little man, with freckled face, very blue eyes that stared so that white circles grew all around the iris, and very stiff red hair that now stood nearly on end. He wore a red shirt, duck trousers and the high boots of the miner.

"Och! Dandy! Judy's gone. Me swate swishter's gone!" cried Mike, striking his hands together in despair.

"Judy—gone!—whativer do you mane, Mike?" demanded the puzzled visitor.

"She's gone, I tell ye! Gone, gone, gone! Och, Sint Michael, me pathron! that ivir I should see the day an' me swate swishter gone!"

"Judy gone? I can't belave it! Wherivir did she go? And 'long o' who?" demanded the bewildered visitor.

"Och! it was all along av a dhrame as have turned the head av her!"

"A dhrame?" repeated the older man.

"Just a dhrame! A dhrame that sent her tearing along the trail afther Ran Hay!"

"The Lord betune us and harrum! Tell me all about it, Mike."

"Thin I will, Dandy," said the young man.

And soothed to find some one into whose ears he might pour his sorrows and perplexities, Mike told the story of Judy's dream in the night after Ran's departure; of how she saw him in her dream, lying wounded and dying alone

in the wilderness; of her passionate desire to follow his trail and find out for herself whether he was safe or not safe; of his own firm opposition to her wishes; of her apparent submission to his will.

"Whin all the time," complained Mike, "the poor, deluthed and misguided craychur was hiding in her harrt the plan to lave as soon as me back was turrund! Which she did, bad luck to the day!"

"And this same happened yistiddy morning?" questioned the visitor.

"Yistiddy morning that ivir was!"

"And whin did ye find it all oot?"

"Not until the minit before you came in. Yistiddy, when I left the house, sure I thought she had give up her wild-goose chase! And all the time she was plotting to lave—the artful craychur! Hivin forgive me for calling me swate Judy sich a name! And I wint away satisfied in me mind and stayed all day at the shaft along wid me new pard to taiche him the rin av the wurruk, seeing he's a granehorn. Then, as the divil would have it, instead av coming straight home, I turned into 'Ben's Bower,' and stayed, carrying on with the bhoys, because for one thing I was half afeard to come home to Judy to find her still fretting after Ran. And so I stayed till tin be the clock, and thin, when I come home and called Judy and she didn't answer, I thought she had gone to bed and gone to slape, especially as her curtain was down. Look!" said Mike, pointing to the hanging blanket.

"Yis, I'm looking," replied Dandy.

"So I wint to bed and to slape with a continted mind in as fine a fool's paradise as ivir ye saw! But this morning, whin I waked up, the first thing that stared into me two looking eyes was this little divil pinned till the wall. Rade it," said Mike, stooping and picking up Judy's note, which he had dropped on the floor.

"Sure ye know I can't rade a line if it was to save my sowl. Rade it yourself, Mike," said Dandy.

The young man complied, and then said, with a gesture of desperation:

"She's gone! She's got twinty-four hours start av me! But I'm afther her immadiately, and I mane to folly hor till I find her, dead or alive!"

"And sure, sure, I'm wid ye, Mike, me bhoy. I'm wid ye wid all the harrt and sowl that's in me," said Andrew Quinn, clapping his hand into that of Mike's.

"Oh, Dandy! You're me friend!" faltered the boy, almost blubbering.

"Not a bit av it! Nivir spake av it!" exclaimed Andrew, hardly reckoning the meaning of his words. "And sure I've got a dooble-barrel shotgun with the longest range in the counthry. And a bludehound that can't be bett. And we'll start immadiate."

"Oh, Dandy! You're too good for this wurruld," blubbered poor little Mike, fairly broken down by this devotion.

"And why not, sure?" demanded Andrew, without appreciating the meaning of his own words, and really intending to deprecate praise rather than claim it. "Why not? Why wouldn't I go along wid yer, and see ye through your trubbel? But, me bhoy, you haven't had your brikfist."

"Oh, I can't ate nothing, naythe r!" cried Mike.

"Then, you sha'n't have to cook nothing. But we'll lave this immadiate and drop into Ben's Bower, where ye can always get a bowl av sthrong coffee at this hour av the morning, and we'll both take some. Meself has had no brikfist yet. Be the same token I had just come in this morning to ask Judy to lind me the loan av a match to kindle me fire, to git me brikfist, when the sight av your face turned me upside down and inside out. A hot brikfist and hot, sthrong coffee will set us well on our way, and that we can get at Ben's," said Dandy.

Mike yielded, then he hastily tied up a bundle, took down a shotgun from its rest, put on his hat, and said:

"I'm riddy!"

"Then rin on to Ben's, and I'll jine ye in a jiffy. I've just to dhrop into me shanty and get me dog and gun," said old Andrew.

Twenty minutes later, the two men, having breakfasted at Ben's and spread the news of Judy's flight among all the early customers, set out on their journey through the wilderness, each armed with a gun, provided with food, and preceded by the bloodhound—not a great, powerful animal like Judy's Russian, but a little dog with a large head and scent so keen that his master described him as "all schent."

They walked on through the dewy morning, every mile deeper and deeper into the depths of the wilderness.

Mike, in his anxiety and impatience, would have hurried on at his utmost speed, but old Andrew restrained him.

"Sure, bhoy, if we be to thravel all day, we'll get over more ground by taking av it aisy, nor if we pit ourselves out o' breath be hurrying first off; and, more betoken, if ye go at this rate, ye'll have to lave me behind," panted the old man, trying to keep up with his young companion.

"Av coorse, ye are right, Dandy, and I ask yer pardon. The divil's in me, I belave," said Mike, slackening his pace.

But, withal, they made such good progress that at eleven o'clock they reached the spot where Judy and Tip had stopped at noon to rest and take their midday meal.

The two men would have passed the spot without noticing anything, if it had not been for the little dog, Lion, who ran all in and out among the low brush, snuffing along the ground, whimpering, after the manner of his kind.

"She stopped here! As sure's ye're born, she stopped here. Sure the schent will lay longer, and be a dale sthronger, on the spot where she sat down to rist, maybe for hours, than it will on the road she early passed along," said old Andrew.

And though both the men knew that it was of no use to look for her there, yet they turned aside from the trail to search for traces of the fugitive.

They found none. Even the young spring herbage upon which she had sat while taking her lunch had recovered its elasticity, and stood up.

The travelers passed on, now unwillingly followed by the dog. They walked on until the position of the sun, as well as the emptiness of their stomachs, warned them that it was noon, and time to rest and to eat.

They sat down on the side of the thicket, and opened their wallets, and feasted on bacon and bread, whisky and cold tea; feeding the dog as plentifully as they fed themselves.

They took but fifteen minutes' rest, and started again. They made faster progress than Judy had been able to make, for it was now but two o'clock when they reached the hollow oak tree where the girl had passed the night.

Here Lion set up a most woeful whimpering, circling around the tree in quick runs, and finally pawing at the trunk.

"She's been here, as sure as shooting!" said Mike, and they began to investigate the spot, looking even into the hollow tree; but they saw nothing.

"It's mortifyin' to the natur' av man, so it is, that the brute creation can find signs where the human can't," said Andrew, as they left the tree and walked on, followed by the dog.

They trudged on perseveringly all through the afternoon until the sun was sinking low and the shadows were growing dark in the forest.

"Sure, Mike, me bhoy, I'm 'feared I'll have soon to gin up and rest. I can hardly drag one hale afther the other," complained old Andrew.

"Och, thin, Dandy, I was a baste to accipt yer offer at all. Yer too ould for this wurruk, Dandy," replied Mike.

"Nivir a bit! Nivir a bit!" exclaimed the old fellow, getting up his mettle and straightening himself. "I can kape it oop as long as you can, me bowld bhoy."

At this moment the dog showed strange signs of disturbance, cried, whined, whimpered, ran up and down on one side of the road, and nosed on the thicket.

"Whativir is the matther wid the baste now?" inquired Mike.

"Divil a bit av me knows. It's something out av the common, be the same token," replied old Andrew.

As he spoke the dog suddenly dashed into the thicket.

"He's afther something. Come!" exclaimed Mike; and he sprang after the dog, crashing through the undergrowth, regardless of tearing clothes or skin.

Old Andrew followed more carefully.

Mike plunged and crushed on, guided only by the voice of the hound, until, torn, scratched and bleeding, he reached a small opening in the forest, where a camp fire had smoldered out to cold brands, and where the hound lay across something, with his head in the air, howling hideously.

Mike drew near and looked down, and with an exclamation of horror.

"Hooly mither av saints diffind us! Hooly Saint Pather, pray for us! Oh, Dandy! Dandy! Come here, man!"

pleaded Mike. And he continued to invoke all the saints, while old Andrew slowly stumbled through the close thicket.

"And what in the divil is it at all? The dog howling and you screeching!" growled the old man, as he came into view.

"Look! Look!" cried Mike, unable to do more than to point at the dead fire and the group beside it.

Dandy looked, and his red hair slowly raised on end, while the white circles grew around the iris of his dilated, staring eyes.

It was, indeed, a picture to congeal the blood of the spectator.

The setting sun glancing through a rift in the forest shone upon the dead fire, upon the wailing dog, with his nose in the air, and upon the dead body of a man, naked, and mutilated beyond all recognition.

Old Andrew sat down on the ground, more exhausted by horror than by fatigue. He drew his whisky flask from his pocket and reached it out to Mike, gasping:

"There, bhoy: Take it! Dhrink, and put some sowl into yourself."

"No. Dhrink first, Dandy, and take a good pull while you're at it. Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" cried Mike.

Old Andrew put the flask to his lips, and only took it away to get his breath. Then he handed it to Mike, who followed his example.

Still, a few minutes passed before the men ventured to speak of what lay before them.

"Och, sure, it will nivir be Ran, and the dhrame come true!"

"Hivin be praised, no! It's none av Ran! It's taller by a head nor Ran. It's the lavings of a tall man, that same is!"

"Might it be Gintleman Geff?"

"Yes, indade it might; but if it be, where is Ran? And, och! where is Judy?"

"Ah, sure, where is they? But it mayn't be Gintleman Geff."

"No, is mayn't. Or it may. And Lord betune us and harrum, whose wurruk is it? What do ye think, Dandy?" asked Mike.

"I think as some Injun or some other ruffian kilt him,

and robbed him, and stripped him, and left him here; and I think the wolves finished him. That's what I think!"

"Shall we bury it?"

"Will we dig a grave wid oor tin fingers, thin?"

"Oh, sure, I forgot. But what will we do?"

"Rist a while; thin go on. No; thin take another pull at the flask to stringthin us, and thin go on."

"That's so," agreed Mike.

"Here, Lion, ye fool baste! What the divil do ye mane be kaping up that row, whin there's no more needcissity for it? Come here, sir!" called old Andrew.

The dog came and crouched at his feet.

"Now we will go on," said the man, rising when he thought they had sufficiently rested.

And the two men, followed by the dog, made their way through the thicket back to the trail, and continued their journey.

"Longman's can't be very far from here," said Andrew. "We'll go there. Maybe he'll be able to tell us some news av Ran or Judy, or maybe both! And we will tell him what we have found, and take counsel wid him what's best to do."

They walked on valiantly until it grew dark, then they lighted their lanterns and continued to walk for an hour longer.

Then suddenly they heard a voice singing out:

"Hello!"

"Hello, yourself!" shouted back the loud voice of Mike.

The dog had begun to bark furiously.

"Be quiet, you baste!" cried Andrew, collaring him.

"I see your light! Who are you?" shouted the voice of the invisible stranger.

"Andrew Quin, at your sarvice, and No-Man's Mike!" squeaked old Dandy, answering for the first time.

"And I am Longman," responded the stranger.

"Och, Misther Longman is it, bliss the harrt av ye! Come along wid yourself and let's see the face av ye! Be quiet, Lion, ye baste, or I'll choke ye!"

Longman's steps were now heard, crunching through the thicket, and presently he came out on the road, and stood before them—a powerful, gigantic hunter.

"Sure, though we nivir saw the face av ye, the fame av ye has——" began Andrew.

But Mike's impetuous anxiety cut him short with:

"Och, Misther Longman! Can ye give a poor, harrt-broken bhoy any news av his poor swishter, who——"

Longman answered promptly, without waiting for him to finish his question:

"Miss Judy is safe and well at the fort. I left her sitting by the bedside of Ran Hay, who was found lying in the woods badly wounded, and conveyed to the hospital, but he is doing well now."

"Thin glory be to the Lord! And her dhrame was thrue, after all!" piously ejaculated Mike.

"Come along with me to my lodge, both of you, and I will tell you all about it. You can go to the fort in the morning, and see your sister and your friend. It is too late to go there to-night. You could not be admitted."

"Glory be to all the saints in hivin!" exclaimed Mike, who felt as if he could not be too thankful for the safety of Ran and Judy.

Then, with some compunction for his forgetfulness, he inquired:

"And what av the gintleman who thraveled in company with Misther Hay?"

"Gentleman Geff?"

"Yis, that same?"

"He has not been seen nor heard of since Hay was brought in."

"Thin, bedad, what's left av the poor fellow is lying oot yander in the deep woods," said Mike.

"What!" exclaimed the hunter.

"It's thruth I'm telling you!" gravely replied Mike.

CHAPTER XXII

REVEILLE!

AT SUNRISE the alarm of drums beating the reveillé roused Judy from a deep, deep sleep.

She jumped out of bed and stood bewildered in the pretty little bower, where the tender morning light, shining through pink shades upon pink walls, made a lovely rosy atmosphere.

For a moment Judy was lost in amazement, and with the loud noise of the drums in her ears and the rosy air around her she had a vague impression that she had been blown up in an explosion, and had "landed" in paradise.

The next moment she remembered where she was; but thought the noise outside meant an attack by the Indians.

Frightened half to death, she leaned across her bed and drew aside the curtain which was behind it, and looked out of the window.

What she saw quite reassured her. The soldiers were mustering for the morning parade.

Judy knew nothing of reveillés or parades; but she knew that this spectacle was not a battle; that was all, but it contented her.

Before she dressed herself, she made up her pretty bed and festooned the pink mosquito net and window curtains.

Then she washed her face and hands, combed her curly black hair, and put on her red linsey skirt and black cloth jacket. Lastly, she set the little washstand in order and left the room, which opened upon the common hall of the house. Here she found all the younger children of the colonel at their games; and unkempt little savages they looked at first sight, for they were permitted to engage with perfect freedom in all outdoor as well as indoor romps and sports that tended to healthy physical development.

Judy courtesied to the young ones. Were they not the colonel's children, and was not the colonel an awfully great man?

They stopped their play, stared at her, laughed and said: "Good-morning."

A door opened on the right, and an orderly appeared, and called the children in to breakfast.

They all dropped hoops, skipping ropes, dumb-bells and other tools, and followed the soldier.

The hall was empty of all except Judy, who was left alone.

She sat down on a wooden chair, because she was at a loss to know what else to do.

But only for a moment; for in that time Mrs. Moseley came through the same door, looked about as if in search of somebody, and seeing Judy, went to her and took her hand, saying:

"Come, child! come in to breakfast. I did not know you were up until Madge and Mell told me there was 'a big girl in the hall.' I thought you would have slept later."

"It was the dhrums, ma'am," said Judy.

"Ah, yes! I understand. Come!"

"Oh, if you plaise, ma'am, could ye tell me how Ran is the morn?"

"There has come no report from the surgeon yet, but I will send and inquire."

"Oh, if you plaise, ma'am, would ye kindly lave me rin over there and see for meself?"

"After you have had breakfast, child; not before," said the lady, as she held the girl's hand, leading her toward the door through which all the children had passed.

They went into a room where stood a long table, which, with the twelve chairs at the side, and the two at head and foot, took up nearly all the space. And every chair but three was filled by a girl or boy of the colonel's numerous family.

But the colonel himself was not present. Judy, with unconventional frankness, looked up and down for him in vain and felt disappointed at not seeing him; it was like missing a sight of the President.

Then she looked inquiringly into the face of her hostess.

"The colonel is not with us this morning He took an early cup of coffee and started to ride to the Nez Percez Agency, and will not return until night. I'm glad you miss the colonel, child. It shows a good heart," said Mrs. Moseley, smiling and patting the girl on the head. "There, sit down there by Teddy and he will see to you," she added, touching a vacant chair next to her twelve-year-old son.

Judy smiled and blushed, and seated herself.

However rough the colonel's boys might be at their games, they were perfect little gentlemen at table, and "Teddy," otherwise Master Edward Moseley, served the young Irish girl with as much politeness as if she had been a princess.

While they were still at table, the orderly, whom Mrs. Moseley had sent to the hospital to inquire after the condition of Randolph Hay, returned with the news that the wounded man was doing very well—information that was vague, but satisfactory.

When breakfast was over, Judy put on her hat and prepared to start for the hospital.

"I will go with you, child," said Mrs. Moseley, as she took her own garden hat from its peg on the wall and joined the girl.

It was a glorious spring morning and the ground within the wall of the fort was beautiful, the grass was green and fresh, tulips, hyacinths, jonquils, daffodils and other spring flowers were blooming in the parterre where they were carefully cultivated by the soldiers.

Mrs. Moseley and her little companion walked along the gravel path that led from the colonel's quarters to the hospital, talking as they went.

"Is it certain that this young man Hay is heir to that great English estate?" inquired the lady.

"He's a dale more'n that, ma'am. He's the very nixt av kin to that same estate!" said Judy, with pride in every tone of her voice and look of her face.

They reached the hospital and were met by the surgeon.

"Better! Much better," he said, with a smile, in answer to Mrs. Moseley's inquiry, as to the health of his patient

And the doctor led the way to the ward where Ran lay.

As the three approached his bed, and stood beside him, the young man opened his eyes, stared a moment, and then murmured vaguely:

"Why—it's—Judy!"

"Oh! glory be to the Lord! he knows me!" exclaimed the excited girl, ready to cry with joy.

"Keep quiet; keep quiet," whispered the surgeon.

"But, sure, mayn't I spake to him?" breathlessly demanded the girl.

"Yes, but gently, gently," said the doctor.

"Ran, darlint, ye do know me, don't ye now?" she inquired, coaxingly.

"Why, yes—you are Judy. But——" said the youth; and then he paused, and put his hand to his head.

"What is it, Ran, dear?"

"I—don't know. But—how came you here in the woods, Judy? And it is daylight, too. It was dark just now. And here are strangers. But I don't see Gentleman Geff. It is all—very strange. I don't—I can't—I give it up. I—I give—up the conundrum."

And, with one of his old piquant smiles, Ran turned his face to the wall, and from very exhaustion suddenly fell asleep.

"It is all right," said the surgeon, with a smile. "Sit by him as you did yesterday. Let him see you again when he wakes, and give a sign to Peter at the door to bring him the beef tea which Mrs. Moseley will kindly have ready for him. He will not be so surprised to see you again as at first he was. He will be more able to realize the change in his sursoundings, and to learn all that has happened to him, and, perhaps, to give us some clew to the identity of his assailant."

"Then I may spake with him as much as I plaise?" asked Judy.

"Not at all. By no means. As soon as Hay wakes you must call Peter to bring his food, and, when he has brought it, send him for me. I will come and see the boy, and be able to tell whether you may talk to him or not. Now be a faithful nurse, and mind my words."

"Sure, I'll rimimber iviry word ye ivir did spake till me in yer life. And why wouldn't I, sir, and ye sich a friend to Ran? Bless ye, sir!" said Judy.

"That will do. That will do, my good girl," said the surgeon, laughing.

"Good-by, Judy, until dinner time. We always have dinner in the middle of the day, for the children's sake At two o'clock, Judy. You know the way over to our quarters now, and I shall expect you to be punctual," said Mrs. Moseley, turning to leave the ward.

"Sure, ma'am, it's me guardian angel come doon to the earth, ye must be!—that good that ye are to me!" replied the girl.

The lady smiled and waved her hand in deprecation of all this praise and walked away, followed by the surgeon.

"Doctor," said Mrs. Mcseley, when they had left the hospital and were crossing the grounds leading to the colonel's quarters, "is this young man really going to recover?"

"Really, so far as medical experience and human foresight can judge and predict."

"Recover both health and reason, doctor?"

"Both, so far as I see. There is as good reason to believe

that he will be sound in mind and body a month hence as that anyone will be."

"What do you think of the girl?" rather abruptly demanded the lady.

"She is a good, true, brave child. If she were only trained and cultured, she would make a noble, brilliant woman."

"How much do you know about her, doctor?"

"Very little. Nothing but what she herself has told me, and her frank, truthful face and manner have indorsed—that this youth, Hay, and her brother, Michael, were partners in a mining camp; that she was engaged to be married to Hay; that on the second of April Hay started, with a companion, to tramp from Grizzly to San Francisco, on business, and that she, having been frightened by, or—as she put it—'warned in a dhrame,' she started in pursuit of him, tramped a day and night, and part of another day, and met with Longman, who told her where her friend was lying wounded, and brought her to the fort. That is all I know of the brave child."

"Well, I can tell you more than that, both from her own story, which she has told in detail to me, and also from my previous knowledge of this young Hay, and of which I spoke to you as soon as I saw the boy."

"Yes, I remember. What is her story?"

"Come in, if you can spare the time, and I will tell you."

" Of course I can spare the time. My office here, in this healthy climate, and in these peaceful times, is almost a sinecure. If it were not for an occasional broken head, the result of a row among the outside barbarians, or an attack of bile, the result—let us say, to put it charitably—of a late supper among our own brave boys, I really should not have practice enough to keep my hand in; and 'my right hand would forget its cunning.' "

They had now reached the colonel's quarters.

"Let us sit here on the piazza; it is very warm for the season. Find a seat for yourself, doctor," said Mrs. Moseley, dropping into one of the Quaker chairs, and beginning to fan herself with her straw hat, which she had taken off for the purpose.

When the two were finally seated, Mrs. Moseley turned to

a group of her children, who were conning their schoolbooks in the opposite end of the long porch, and said:

"Gery, take the little ones in, and hear them recite their lessons. Nance, go fetch me my workbasket and Polly's new frock, that you will find cut out and rolled up in the lower bureau drawer."

Nance, otherwise Miss Anna Moseley, and Gery, otherwise Master Gerald Moseley, went on their errands, followed by the children.

"If I were you, Mrs. Moseley, I should have to call the roll every day to be sure that all the children were on the premises," said Dr. Hill.

"A long roll call, is it not, doctor?" But without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Moseley turned to her eldest daughter, who had just returned with a large workbasket in one hand, and a roll of red calico in the other.

"Now, go, dear, and study your French lesson; I will hear you when I come in—that is, if you should be ready," added the mother, as she took the articles from the hands of the daughter, who immediately returned into the house.

"She is studying French, then?" said the dictor.

"Yes; with what help I can give her. Of course, I cannot pretend to give her the Parisian accent. Some day I hope she may have a French mistress, but we cannot provide her with one out here, and we will not send one of our girls from home for education"

"I think you are quite right, Mrs. Moseley."

"But now for my story; and I hope you will excuse me if I sew while I talk. I can baste these seams for the machine, and even work the buttonholes, out here."

"Why, certainly."

The lady unrolled her work, but before she could begin her narrative, another of her girls came running up from the lawn.

"Well, Matty, what is it, love?"

"Oh! mamma, dear, Will has just brought in a squaw with a whole basketful of wild strawberries to sell! There must be half a peck of them, at least, and all for a quarter of a dollar! But Reub says they are not ripe," exclaimed the panting girl.

"They cannot be fully ripe so early in the season, but

they may do to stew for tarts. I'll go and see. Excuse me, doctor."

And the lady went off to interview the squaw.

In about fifteen minutes she returned, resumed her seat, took up her work, and said:

"Now at length I am ready."

"And I am all attention," said the doctor.

And then the lady told the story of Ran Hay, in all its details, as it is already known to the readers.

"Now so much for young Hay. I knew him when he was an infant, and I recognized him as soon as I saw him by the extreme peculiarity of his Castilian beauty."

"But, my dear lady, you promised to tell me about Judy," said the surgeon.

"I am coming to her presently. The girl interests me chiefly in her relation to the boy. It is young Hay's identity, position and prospects that I wish to impress upon you. He is next of kin to the late Squire John Haywood Hay, of Haymore, and the heir-at-law of his vast estates; and I—I can prove the identity of the boy, if this should ever be called in question."

"I see. But now as to Judy?"

"Now, as to Judy. You are aware that she is a girl of the humblest origin?"

"Yes."

"But you are not aware that she is of unknown parentage—in fact, a foundling who was left, with her twin brother, at the gate of the Infant Home of the Holy Maternity, in Sacramento."

"No, I was not," said the doctor, very gravely.

"Neither she nor her brother have had any education beyond what the charity schools connected with the parishes give to the destitute children."

"I see that the girl is utterly uncultivated."

"Now, then, to the point. The colonel and myself, and you, also, doctor, hold rather responsible positions toward this boy and girl. The boy, as the heir of a great estate, will occupy a very high position in society. The girl is poor, humble and ignorant. And yet they are engaged to be married."

"Well, my dear lady, we are neither their parents nor

their guardians. We have no sort of right to prevent them," said the surgeon.

"I have not the slightest wish to do so, for I think if poor little Judy were to be torn from her lover it would kill her."

"Not at all," said the doctor. "She is physically too strong and sturdy. But I am not so sure it would not turn her brain. She is just of the temperament to go crazy for love. Mrs. Moseley, we cannot interfere just now. You did a kind, womnaly part when you threw the shield of your position here over that girl, and protected her in her ministrations to her wounded lover. No one will dare to criticise your protégée."

"I hope not. And yet I do not know that I have done well. Every day that poor girl sits at the bedside of her wounded lover will rivet her heart with stronger bonds to him. And if he should not be true to her! How great his temptations to throw her off in his new position will be! And that would drive her mad, doctor."

"Well, ma'am?"

"I want you to do something for me."

"Anything for you, Mrs. Moseley."

"It is in the interests of that young pair that I ask this."

"Well, Mrs. Moseley?"

"I want you to watch him in his intercourse with his young nurse. See if he is really, truly, deeply attached to her, as she is to him. See, also, if he has the true ring of pure affection and honest constancy in him. You can find out."

"Well, and then? If I should find him all right?"

"In that case, just as soon as he is able to answer for himself, we will have the young pair married by our chaplain."

"Mrs. Moseley!" exclaimed the surgeon, in amazement.

"What is the matter?"

"Why, they are so young. They ought both to be at school."

"Well, and so they shall be. It was his plan, poor boy, on coming into his estates, to put her to school and go himself to college. That plan need not be interrupted. Let them have the marriage ceremony performed. If they love each other, as I am sure they do, they will feel happier and more secure to know that they are bound to each

other irrevocably. Then he can go into college and she into a lady's school, or, what in her case would be better, she could have a private governess."

"Dear Mrs. Moseley, this is all so strange to me that I do not know what to say to it."

"Well, then, think about it, and when the idea becomes familiar to you, you will think better of it."

"Possibly," said the surgeon, still in doubt.

One of the lads now came hastily from the house.

"What is the matter, Clin?" inquired the mother of many.

"Mamma, dear, won't you please come and settle Kit? She won't study her books, nor let any one else study theirs. She keeps on teasing Tom," said Clin, otherwise Master Clinton Moseley.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Will you excuse me, doctor?" inquired the lady, with a smile.

"Certainly, Mrs. Moseley. I have taken up too much of your valuable time already," said the surgeon, with a bow.

The lady re-entered the house.

And the surgeon sauntered off toward the hospital.

Meanwhile, Judy sat watching by the side of her sleeping lover, and wishing that she had brought her knitting with her from Grizzly; for now that her mind was relieved from all anxiety on Ran's account the industrious girl found it unutterably wearisome to sit still for hours and do nothing.

Two hours, that seemed two days to Judy, passed before Ran stirred. Then he turned his head, opened his eyes, and stared at the watcher by his side, and muttered slowly:

"Why—there she is—again!"

"Yis, Ran, darlint. Here I be ag'en, and here I've been all the time. And ye know me, Ran, dear. Tell me ye know your own, own gurrl!" she said, softly, bending over him.

"Surely, I know my Judy," he answered, slowly, raising his hand feebly, and passing his fingers over his forehead with a perplexed look.

"I'll lave ye a minit, Ran, darlint, to git ye something to ate. I'll not be gone a minit, aither," said Judy, rising to go.

But a feeble hand stretched out, and a feeble tone of entreaty detained her.

"Don't leave me, Judy. I am—so—confused."

"Thin I won't lave the room at all, Ran. I'll only go to the door and call the man," said Judy, soothingly.

"What man? I—I know nothing—not even where I am—nor—how I came here," muttered Ran, looking wearily around him, and of course recognizing nothing that he saw except the face and form of Judy.

But the girl had slipped to the door and spoken about half a dozen words to old Peter.

"Fetch the bafe tay and the docther."

And she slipped back to the bedside almost before Ran had missed her.

"Judy?" he whispered.

"Yis, darlint."

"Take hold of my hand. Squeeze it so I can feel it."

"Yes, Ran. Is that hard enough now? I don't want to hurrt ye," said Judy, pressing his hand closely.

"Yes, dear, that will do. Judy?"

"What, thin, me jewil?"

"You are Judy, are you not?"

"Why, av coorse. Who else would I be?"

"And—I am not delirious, am I, Judy?"

"Not—del—what is it?"

"I mean, I am not out of my head, am I?"

"Ooot av yer head? Not a bit av it, Ran! Not at prisint, glory be to Him!"

"Then, my dear girl, tell me what all this means?"

"And so I will, Ran, dear, when ye have ate and dhrank and put some strength intil ye. Sure here comes the man with the bafe tay."

"What man?"

"Owld Pather, darlint. Owld Pather, who sits outside av the door to rin errands, though blissid the rin he can rin, ayther."

Old Peter now came up to the bed bearing a little tray on which stood a bowl of beef tea and a glass of port wine.

"If ye'll howld the thray, Miss Judy, I'll raise the gintlemin in me arms, so he can take his refrashmints, convaynient like," said Peter, who then gave the tray into Judy's hands, went up to the head of the bed, raised the invalid

into a sitting position, got up behind him, and resting his own back against the headboard, supported Ran on his own broad breast with his arms around the boy's body.

"Now, ye'll just give him a sup av the wine first, Miss Judy," said Peter.

Judy set the tray on a chair, then took the glass of wine and put it to Ran's lips. Ran resting comfortably in the old soldier's arms, sipped the elixir of life held to him, and revived visibly.

"That's a darlint!" sighed Judy, putting down the half-empty glass and complimenting Ran, as if he had done a praiseworthy act.

"Now fade him the bafe tay wid the spoon!" said the old soldier.

And Judy, smiling in delight, sat on the side of the bed, held the bowl on her lap, and administered the beef tea by spoonfuls.

"Och, that will put the life intil him!" said old Peter.

And Judy, in a quiet rapture, knew from what she saw that the veteran spoke the very truth.

When the bowl was empty, the patient drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

"Noo, Miss Judy, give him the lave av the wine to top off wid," said old Peter.

Judy put down the bowl and took up the glass and held it to the lips of her patient, who drank it all, and drew another deep breath of perfect satisfaction.

"Hooray for us!" said the old soldier, in a low tone of half-suppressed exultation. "Hooray for us! We'll aise him doon now. But, Miss Judy, ye'll plaise to bate up his pillow and turn it over, while I howld him oop."

Judy obeyed, and neatly arranged the bolster and pillows, while old Peter supported the patient.

"Now we'll aise him doon, comfortable, so," said the old man, suiting the action to the word.

And then he smoothed the coverlet and finally he took up the tray with the empty bowl and glass, and started to leave the room.

"I thank ye so much! I thank ye so much, Misther Pather, and so will Ran whin he is able to think his thoughts, and ixpriss his falings, poor bhoy!" said Judy, gratefully.

"I thank you now, sir; indeed, I do, very much. You have been more than kind. But I—I am somewhat confused still—I don't know whose house this is, or how I came to be in it. But you are very good to me, and I am very grateful to you," said Ran.

"Whisht, whisht, man! What for should ye thank a man for doing av his plain Christian and milingtary dooty? Miss Judy! he's all right noo! He hasn't said so many words at a stretch since the day he was brought into the house! And sure, here's the docther himself!" said old Peter, as he slipped through the door, saluting his superior officer as he passed out.

The doctor came into the room, and closed the door.

Ran looked up to see the newcomer.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME SURPRISES

"WELL," said the surgeon, as he walked up to the side of the bed and took the hand of his patient, to test the pulse, "how are we this morning?"

Ran looked up, with a faint smile fluttering about his pallid lips, and replied:

"Speaking for the wounded man, doctor, 'he is clothed and in his right mind,' though sorely perplexed as to his surroundings."

The surgeon himself looked "perplexed," as well as surprised. He had not expected to find so much brightness and intelligence in the bethrothed husband of poor, ignorant Judy. Before he could reply, the young man continued:

"I have much, very much, to thank you for, doctor, and to thank others for, as well."

The doctor looked even more puzzled. Here was the injured youth not only fully restored to consciousness and intelligence, but speaking with the grace and courtesy of a cultured gentleman. And yet he was going to marry rough little Judy.

"This is more clear talking than he's talked since he

woke up, docther," put in Judy, who had given her place by the pillow to the surgeon, and passed around to the foot of the cot, where she stood.

The surgeon sat down in the chair vacated by the girl, and again took the hand of the patient and held it, while he answered:

"Yes, there is great improvement. The highly stimulating and nourishing food he has just taken has much to do with this new strength, of course; but we must not tax that too much. He should repose after feeding."

The youth spoke again, but feebly:

"If you would kindly tell me where I am, how I came here and to whom I am indebted for all the care—and kindness—and attention—I have received, and am receiving, I should be even more grateful than I am, and then should be able to repose."

"Well, yes, you can bear it now, my brave boy. So listen, and be calm. On the night of the second of April you were found in the woods near Longman's lodge, wounded and insensible. And you were brought here to the fort, and laid here on this bed in the surgical ward..

"And you are the surgeon—Dr. Hill?" inquired Ran.

"Yes."

"Again I thank you very much. Now, how came Miss Judith Man here? Who told you anything about her? I could not, for I must have been long in a stupor. Pardon my inquisitiveness, doctor."

But before the surgeon could reply, impulsive Judy hastened to explain.

"Och, sure, nobody towld nothing about me; as how should they, when they knowed nothing? But I was warrund in a dhrame, Ran. I was warrund in a dhrame."

"Warned—in a dream?" slowly questioned the young man.

"Yis; sure. The docther and the lady tell me I wasn't warrund at all, but only skeered, and that finding you wounded was only a co-co-co-confidence."

"And you came to look after me, Judy?"

"Yis."

"Who came with you, dear?"

"Tip, sure; who else?"

"And you came all the way through the wilderness alone,

with no one but Tip?" exclaimed the young man, staring at his sweetheart, attempting to rise on his elbow, and then falling back from exhaustion.

"And, sure, why wouldn't I?" queried Judy.

"Now, this won't do at all. If you excite yourself so, I must take away Miss Judy and give you a sedative," said the surgeon, kindly, but firmly, as he arragned the pillows and covering of the bed.

"I will be calm, sir; have no doubt of me. But the idea of her crossing the wilderness with only the dog!"

"'Lis'bith of Siberia hadn't even a dog, Ran!" put in Judy.

"I was found wounded and insensible, you say. Where was Gentleman Geff?" inquired the young man.

"He manes the great swell gintleman who come wid him," Judy explained.

"No such person has been seen or heard of," said the surgeon.

"Sure, we thought whin ye come to ye'self ye could tell us what had got him," said Judy.

Poor Ran put his wasted hand up to his forehead, and tried to recall the past, but without much effect.

"I don't know," he said, piteously; "there's a gap somewhere. I do know that we two, Delamere—whom the miners called Gentleman Geff—and myself had a pleasant, leisurely walk all that day through the forest. We rested at noon in a pine glade. We went on in the afternoon, and had a thought of sleeping at Longman's. But we seemed to be a long time getting near it. Let me see. Let me think now."

Ran paused, and both his hearers kept quiet.

Presently he resumed:

"It came on to be night. We were in a very thick wood. The trail was almost invisible by the light of the lantern, and so narrow and difficult that we could only walk in single file. As I knew the trail best, Delamere sent me on a few feet ahead of him with the lantern. Stay—let me reflect."

Again the youth paused, passed his hand across his forehead, and then suddenly brightened up, and said:

"Yes. I remember now. The thicket was very close and dark; but up overhead, through the foliage of the tall

trees, I could see the stars shining from a clear sky. They were so many, so large and so brilliant, that I recalled the song we used to sing together, Judy. You and I, who never had any heart-breaking sorrow, used to join our voices in:

" 'Oh, thou who dryest the mourner's tear.'

Don't you remember? Well, I was singing the last verse, with the refrain:

" 'When sorrow touched by Thee grows bright
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day,
As darkness shows us worlds of light——'

and then suddenly came a thunderbolt and oblivion," concluded Ran.

His two hearers kept silence for a few minutes, to give him time to rest and recover himself; for he was as yet very weak.

Presently Ran resumed, speaking faintly:

"Of course, now I understand that I was shot down; but by whom I do not know, or even suspect. If life depended on it, I could remember no more of the circumstance, and nothing between the shock in the woods and the recovery in this bed."

"Suspicion fell upon Gentleman Geff when he was known to have been your comrade, and was found to be missing," said the surgeon.

"On Gentleman Geff? Mr. Delamere? Oh, that was very unjust. Geoffrey Delamere is a perfect gentleman, and one of my best friends," warmly replied Ran.

"Yis, indeed! He is that! A perfect gintleman! That's the raison they made fun av him in the camp. But, mind ye, I don't like the gintleman meself! I wouldn't belave ivirything he sez; but, dear me; he wears the whitest and finest av linen, and carries the finest av scinted soap in his bag! Oh, no! Gintleman Geff might lie and chate at cards like any ither gintleman, but he could niver murther and rob like a bludethirsty ruffian in a ragged shirt and owld top boots!"

"Of course not," assented the surgeon, with good-humored sarcasm.

"Rob? Did ye say rob, Judy? Was I robbed?" inquired Ran.

"Av iviry living thing on yeez!" replied Judy.

"I had no living thing on me," said Ran, with his queer smile.

"Av coorse I mane av iviry blissid thing aboot ye."

"But I had no blessed thing about me, Judy."

"Och, sure, it's well ye are getting to take me oop so short!" said Judy.

"But my young friend, you were robbed as well as half murdered," said the surgeon.

"Indeed, sir, I had little enough about me of any value to tempt the poorest brute. Only documents of no use to anyone but myself, and a few ounces of gold dust, that, sold in San Francisco, would have borne my expenses to New York. That was all."

"Not enough to tempt a gentleman like Delamere certainly," said the doctor.

"No, indade," agreed Judy.

"But what do you suppose became of your companion?" inquired the surgeon.

"Delamere?"

"Of course."

"Oh, I think he, too, was killed, poor fellow! poor fellow! And to meet such a fate through the kindness of his heart and the fidelity of his friendship in bearing me company through the wilderness!" sighed poor Ran.

For a few moments he seemed to give up his mind to the contemplation of his friend's fate, and to have no thought of the documents and gold dust of which he had been robbed. But, at last, Judy recalled him to the fact of their loss by saying:

"If it's the lost papers and goold as ye are graiving afther, Ran, ye naden't be throubling yourself. Sure I towld Mrs. Moseley, the colonel's wife, all aboot it, and she says as long as it was the copies and not the copy books as was stholen, it don't matther. You can get more copies out of the copy books; and as for the money, whin it's known ye are nixt av kin to a great estate, ye can git all the money ye nade, on aisy terrums, too."

"I know that, dear Judy. I am not thinking of that, but of poor Delamere. As his body has never been found, he may not be dead. He may have been carried off by the Indians."

At this moment old Peter came into the ward, walked up to the surgeon, and whispered.

"Longman?" exclaimed the doctor, in response to that whisper. "I will go out and see him."

And he arose and followed the old soldier from the ward.

In the surgeon's consulting room he found Longman and two strangers.

"Excuse me for troubling you, doctor, but——"

"Oh, don't mention it, Mr. Longman. Sit down, you and your friends. How can I serve you?" inquired the surgeon.

"Thank you, doctor. These men are friends of young Hay. This is Andrew Quin, one of his neighbors," said Longman, indicating the old man.

The doctor bowed.

"And this is Michael Man, the brother of Miss Judy," he continued, as he presented Mike, who stood up and pulled his hair by way of a deferential salute.

"Ah!" said the doctor; "pray resume your seats. You wish to inquire about my patient. He is very much better and will soon be well."

"And me swishter, docther, if ye plaise, sir?" said Mike, anxiously, but respectfully.

"Your sister is quite well. She is here under the protection of our colonel's wife. Just at present she is sitting beside your wounded friend."

"And, docther, dear, might we be afther saying the two av thim?"

"There is no objection to your seeing your sister presently. But I think you had better defer your interview with your friend until to-morrow. He recovered consciousness so far as to recognize faces and converse rationally this morning; but he is still very weak and has already talked and listened more than is good for him."

"You and Dandy can go home with me and stay at the lodge and come back here again to-morrow. I wouldn't trouble Miss Judy, neither, to-day, if I were you, Mike,

now that you know she is safe, and well protected by Mrs. Col. Moseley," put in the hunter.

"Thank ye for your chivility, Misther Longman, and I belave ye are right. Minny thanks to ye, docther, and to the colonel's leddy, on behalf av me swishter and me friend, and wid me duty till ye, I'll take me lave," said Mike, rising and pulling his hair.

"What time in the morning shall these men make their visit, doctor?" inquired Longman, who had also risen to his feet.

"As early after sunrise as may be convenient to them. It is the best time for seeing the convalescent, who will then have been refreshed by a night's rest and a good breakfast."

"Thank ye, docther. We'll be on time!" said Mike.

"We have a report to make to the colonel, also, relative to a dead body found in the woods, and we will go over to his quarters now," added Longman.

"Stay!" exclaimed the surgeon; "the colonel is not in the fort. He has ridden over to the Nez Percez Agency, and will not be back until night. A dead bodmy found in the woods, you say? What about it? Sit down again and tell me."

The three men resumed their seats.

Longman explained.

"As these two men were coming through that part of the wilderness called 'Phantom Forest,' followed by their dog, the hound broke from them and rushed into the thicket on their left in full cry after a scent. The men followed the dog with some difficulty through the tangled thicket, until they came to a very small opening where there were the brands and ashes of a burned-out fire, and also, stretched beside it, the dead body of a man. Am I right, Mike?" inquired the hunter, appealing to the hero of this ghastly adventure.

"Right ye are, Misther Longman," responded Mike.

"As soon as these two men, coming suddenly upon such a horrible spectacle, recovered from their consternation, they approached and examined the corpse. It was that of a tall man with fair hair and beard. That was all which could be known. For the body had been stripped of all its clothing, and nearly all its flesh by the birds and beasts of prey,

human and brutal. Was not that so, Dandy?" said the narrator, appealing to the other witness.

"So it were, Misther Longman. Such were the sight that met me two looking eyes, that mortial hour, and will nivir lave thim the longest day I have to live," replied old Andrew, with a shudder.

The army surgeon had, in the course of a long experience, seen many a ghastly sight and heard many a horrible report; so he was not so much moved by this description as were the men who had been spectators of the scene. He gravely inquired:

"Have any of you any suspicion of the identity of those remains?"

"Well, yes," answered Longman, "when these two men and myself had compared notes, we became pretty thoroughly convinced that the body was that of one Gentleman Geff, who had been the companion of Ran Hay on his tramp from Grizzly."

"I think you are undoubtedly right," said the surgeon. "Some party of Indians or of border ruffians stole upon the two in the darkness of the night and the solitude of the woods and committed the double crimes. Robbed young Hay and left him for dead. And really murdered and despoiled Delamere. The colonel will be home to-night. But it will be late. So you had better wait until to-morrow to make your report."

Once more the men arose to take leave and bowed themselves out of the surgeon's office.

The doctor returned to the ward where he had left his patient.

He found Ran fast asleep, and Judy sitting by him in weary idleness.

"He wint to slape almost immediately afther ye left him, docther. And sure he is slaping like a angel noo. And will ye be telling me the time av day it is?"

"A quarter to two, my girl."

"Och! then I must be rinning over to the colonel's. The leddy will be looking for me," said Judy.

"Yes, go! Peter will sit by the patient until I send a man to relieve him."

Judy jumped up, seized her hat from its peg on the wall and ran out.

The surgeon had thought it best not to tell her of the arrival of her brother and his companions, or of the dead body, but to leave all that news for the next day. He had not full confidence in Judy's power of reserve, and thought she might let out to Ran news that would tend to disturb his night's rest. So he kept silent, while Judy ran away.

Judy passed the sentinel on duty before the colonel's quarters and entered the house, and made her way to the dining room, where she found the large family of girls and boys all seated at the long table, and the mother buzzing about from one to another, seeing that all were served before she seated herself.

"Ah, you are punctual, Judy! There's your place, next to Teddy, who will wait on you," said Mrs. Moseley, taking the hand of the girl and drawing her toward her seat.

"It is chicken potpie, Miss Judy," confidentially whispered the boy, as the girl sat down.

When the "house mother" had helped all her numerous progeny, and taken her own seat at the head of the table, she found time at last to inquire of Judy about the wounded man.

"He is slaping like an angel, and is almost as good as well," replied Judy, with a joyful smile.

When dinner was over, and the young party dispered for a half hour's recreation before resuming their work or their studies, Judy followed Mrs. Moseley into her sitting room, where the lady immediately sat down to a large basketful of needlework.

"Take a seat, Judy, if you are not in a hurry to get back to your patient," she said.

"But I am in a hurry, plaise, ma'am, and I have only stopped to ax ye to give me some worruk to kape me from biting my finger ends aff from want av implymint."

"Work, Judy? What work, my girl?"

"Any worruk that I can do sitting by Ran—knitting, darning, minding, or anything. It would be kind, ma'am."

"Thank you, child. It is you who are kind, and your help will be of much use to me."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE OTHER VICTIM

Poor Jennie Montgomery, the second victim of Gentleman Geff, lay in bed in the confinement ward of the great hospital, with her four days' old baby girl in her arms.

A professional nurse sat by her side.

A detective officer, in plain clothes, stood at some little distance, within hearing of the patient's voice, yet without the range of her vision.

She was out of danger. Youth, a strong constitution, and the very best medical and surgical science and treatment, had saved her life and the life of her child.

After the examination of her wound the theory of suicide was abandoned, and it was decided that she had been the victim of a murderous assault.

But by whom?

No clew could be found to the would-be murderer. No one, probably, but the girl herself could give the necessary information that might lead to his arrest. And she had been too ill to be questioned. Even now, though out of immediate danger, she was not strong enough to bear the excitement of a judicial examination under oath. Yet the ends of justice required prompt action. So, after the doctor's visit to her that morning, finding her still improving, he had consented to a very cautious examination of the patient in regard to the felonious assault made upon her.

It was arranged that the kind, motherly woman who was her professional nurse, and whose goodness and tenderness had won her confidence and affection, should gently and discreetly question her, while a detective officer, who was also a stenographer, should be stationed out of sight, but within hearing, to take down her words.

A judicial examination might be held later, when the young woman should be well enough to bear it. Meanwhile, time might be saved and a sure clew gained by this.

The good nurse sat down by her patient, and taking her hand, began, in a roundabout manner:

"You said, dear, that your name was Jennie Montgomery, and that you were a stranger in the city here."

"Yes," said the young woman, "I told you that, and it is true."

"Have you any friends in this country that you would like us to write to?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Gilbert. I have no friends at all in this country. I have no one but my precious, precious baby! And you think she will live, though she is so small and weak? You think she will live, nurse?" anxiously demanded the young mother.

"Of course she'll live."

"Oh, then, thank the Lord! Thank the Lord for my own blessed, blessed baby! She is worth all I have ever suffered—all I have ever suffered! I do not care now. I will get well, and work for my precious, precious baby. I will seek no revenge. Everybody shall do as they please, and go free from any vengeance of mine. Oh, how can anyone be spiteful or envious or unhappy who has a heavenly, heavenly baby all her own, her gift from the Lord in heaven?"

"Yes, dear, that is all very well, seeing it's your first and only one; but if you had ten of them, and had to toil and moil——"

"I shall never have but this one—this precious, blessed, heavenly babe!"

"You are very young to say the like of that. And what would your husband say to it?"

"I have no husband," replied Jennie, not bitterly, but emphatically.

"I thought, dear, you told me you were married?" said Mrs. Gilbert.

"Yes, I told you so, and it was true."

"Won't you tell me all about yourself, dear? It is for your own sake I ask."

"Yes. I have nothing personally to conceal I am eighteen years old, the daughter of the Rev. James Campbell, a clergyman of the Church of England, having a parish at Medge, Hants, and I was married about a year ago to Capt. Kightly Montgomery, of the Royal Hussars. See, here is my wedding ring," said the young woman, holding up the third finger of her left hand.

"Yes, I see; but have you your marriage lines all right?"

"Yes, I have my marriage certificate."

"I hope you have it in a safe place, my dearie," said the wily nurse.

"Yes, it is locked up, with other papers, in my box, in my room, at No. 111 Vevay Street. where I believe the people to be honest," replied the young woman, while the detective officer, unseen and unsuspected, heard and took down every word.

"Poor child! And you have no husband now?"

"No."

"How long have you been a widow?" next inquired Mrs. Gilbert.

Jennie paused to reflect, and then answered:

"About six months."

"That is sad. But your baby will be a comfort to you."

"Oh, yes; a heavenly comfort! I will take my baby, my precious baby, and work for her and let the sinners go where they will."

The nurse was trying to lead up to the subject of the murderous assault that had been made on this young woman. But no line she had taken had yet reached it, so at last she was obliged to ask the straightforward question:

"My dear, can you tell me who it was who assailed you on Wednesday night of last week?"

"I can, but I will not. Do not ask me, dear nurse. I am very grateful to you, and to all, for all the kindness shown me here; but do not ask me that question, for I will not answer it," firmly replied Jennie.

"But why will you not, my dear? Why not give a ruffian up to justice?" gently inquired the nurse.

"If I were to do so, what would be his punishment?" in her turn inquired Jennie.

"For assault with intent to kill," said the woman, meditatively. "Well, I don't quite know, my dear; but I think he would get twenty years' penal servitude in the State prison. That's what I think he'll get, and that's what I think he'll deserve to get. Yes, that's just what I think he'll get."

"If he should be caught and convicted."

"Oh! he'll be caught and convicted, and sentenced and sent to penal servitude in the State prison, fast enough, whether you give evidence against him or not."

"Is that true?"

"As true as truth. And why you should wish to protect such a ruffian, my dear, I, for one, cannot make out!"

"See here, Mrs. Gilbert; you speak of my assailant as a ruffian. You do no not even know that the person who attacked me was a man. You do not know but that the assailant was a woman," said Jennie.

"No, I don't know; neither do I know why you shield him or her."

"Listen, Mrs. Gilbert. Before this blessed baby came, I might have given the offender up to justice and even rejoiced in the severity of his punishment, but it would have been in the spirit of revenge. But somehow—I don't understand how—this blessed baby, this helpless, harmless creature on my arms has driven the evil spirit of vengeance out of me and angels have come. That is why I will do nothing to make anyone unhappy, or to ruin any, even a sinner's life. So do not press me on this subject. This is my final answer."

The ward physician making his afternoon rounds, came up to the bed of Jennie Montgomery, felt her pulse, asked her some professional questions, and then said:

"No more talking with this patient to-day nurse; not one word except in the strict line of your hospital duty."

And then he passed on.

The detective took up his notebook and pencil, slipped them into his pocket, nodded to the nurse and retreated, unseen and unsuspected by the patient.

Detective Dryant went immediately to police headquarters and made his report:

A policeman was dispatched to 111 Vevay Street, with orders to seize all the personal effects of Jane Montgomery, and to bring them to police headquarters.

When this was done, the boxes were thoroughly searched. Clews were supposed to be found to the unknown assailant. There were letters addressed to "Mrs. Kightly Montgomery," beginning, "My Adored Wife," ending, "Your Devoted Husband," signed, "Kightly Montgomery."

There was also a tinted ivorytype miniature of a very handsome blond man, with fresh complexion, light brown hair and mustache, and blue eyes. He wore the uniform of the Royal Hussars.

"This must be the gallant captain of whom the poor girl spoke," said Dryant, as he inspected the miniature.

While the officers were still engaged in looking over the letters, a woman, tall, thin, pale, dressed in black and looking as if she had just risen, too soon, from a bed of illness, came into the office and asked to see the chief.

"He is there," said one of the officers, pointing to Capt. Blank, who was seated at his desk behind the railing.

"Well, madam, who are you, and what can we do for you?" inquired Chief Blank.

"If you please, captain, I am Mary Marshall, widow and seamstress, living at No. 29 Quarry Street, and I have come here to give information about the stabbing of that girl at —I mean, just in front of No. 30, which is exactly opposite my place."

"Ah!" exclaimed the chief, and he immediately became all interest and attention.

"If you please, sir, I saw it all from my window."

"And you wish to make the deposition under oath?"

"No, sir; I only want to tell you all I saw, and what I thought at the time. One of the officers might take my words down and read them over to me, and then, if I find there's any mistakes, I might correct them before swearing to the facts. I don't know anything about courts of law, sir, and never was in a police office in all my life before. So I hope you will excuse me," pleaded the voluntary informer.

"Certainly! Dryant, bring this lady a chair and a glass of water. Sit down, madam, you are too weak to stand. Now, then, tell us all you know of this mysterious affair," said the chief, while a stenographer present took notebook and pencil in readiness to take down the words of the informer.

"It was Wednesday night of last week, or, to speak strictly, it was Thursday morning, for it was long after midnight. Have you got that down?"

The stenographer nodded, and the informer went on.

"It was the last night of July, you remember, that was, or rather, as I must say exactly, it was the first day of August, and about two o'clock in the morning. Got that down?"

The scribe nodded.

"It was a very hot night, and I was very feverish. This illness was coming on me, though I didn't know what it was then—thought it was the hot night and the close room. My little son, he is six years old, and is a newsboy, and a very bright little fellow, too, and goes to night school. Got that down?"

"No, it is irrelevant," said the scribe.

"We only take down matters directly bearing upon this case. But go on and tell the story in your own way," said Capt. Blank.

"Oh, I see! Yes, I'll have to tell it in my own way. Well, I was so hot and dry, and feverish, that I couldn't stand it any longer. I got out of bed in the dark, and went and opened the blinds and sat at the window to get a breath of cool air. The street was as dark as pitch. There are no lamps in Quarry Street. It's a short street, and a very narrow one, and very lonesome, too, at night. But you know one's eyes soon get used to the darkness so that one can see, and it is especially so with my eyes. I can see better in the darkness than most people. So I could see all up and down the street that not a soul was stirring, nor a living creature. Got that down?"

"All right, go on."

"And now mark this. Presently I heard voices, low, earnest voices, from up the street on the opposite side of the way. I listened. I didn't mean any harm by listening, but I was so lonesome where I sat that it was interesting to hear somebody talk. Presently I could tell that there was a man's voice and a girl's voice. They were coming down the street on the opposite side of the way. I could tell by their tones that they were disputing; the man's voice was stern and angry, the girl's plaintive and distressed. I listened with all my ears, and I have good ears, I can tell you; and as they came nearer and nearer, I could make out that she was insisting on his doing her justice, and owning her for his wife.

"Then, when they got right opposite to me on the other side of the street, the man slackened his pace and stopped, and so did she. The street was narrow, as I said before, and so still that you might hear a pin drop, and my window was on the second floor front, and I could look right across and down on them, and could see everything they did, and

hear almost every word they said, though they couldn't see me, for the darkness was as black as ink, and I was in that darkness. Now, young man, are you taking down every word I say?"

"Every word."

"Well, now, listen to this. I heard him ask her what she would do if he refused to own her for his wife, and then I heard her answer that she would go straight to that house—I couldn't catch what house—and tell some young lady who was going to marry him—I couldn't catch what young lady—that he was already a married man, and that she, herself, was his wedded wife, and that she would prove it by the marriage certificate and by his own letters and by his photograph; all of which were in her possession at her lodgings. Have you got all that down right?"

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Very well, then, for now it's coming—now it's coming! Oh, that I ever should have seen such a sight! I saw him draw something out of his pocket. I heard him hiss something at her—in such a hissing whisper that every word and every syllable of it seemed to hiss and spin into my ear—yes, and into my very brain. He said:

" 'You have hunted me to the earth. But tiger hunting has its deadly perils.' Anr quick as a flash he struck the knife into her breast, and——"

The witness stopped, and grew paler than before, as if overcome by the image her memory had called up.

Dryant brought her a glass of water, and gave her a palm-leaf fan. She drank the water and lay back in her chair, slowly fanning herself.

"Well, what then?" asked Capt. Blank.

"I don't know. I fainted dead away, and fell on the floor, where I lay without sense until daylight, when my poor, little, frightened boy found me and alarmed the house. That's what I was told, at least. I have been very ill, sir, and out of my head a good part of the time with the fever, but I am better now and on the road to recovery," concluded the woman.

"Why did you not give this information sooner?" inquired the chief.

"I was too ill to leave my bed till this day."

"Why didn't you send for a magistrate, or a police officer, and make a deposition?"

"I never once thought of that, sir. I did not know that was the right way to do. I thought I would have to come here to tell all I saw."

"Did you speak of this matter to any of your neighbors?"

"Not to one of them. I was too ill to talk. And besides, I should have been afraid to speak of it to anybody before coming here to give information at headquarters. But you see I don't know anything about such matters."

"I see you do not. You have told me all you have to tell?"

"Yes, sir, I think so."

"Stay—what sort of looking man was this who stabbed the girl?"

"Well, you know, I couldn't see his complexion, nor the color of his hair or eyes, for it was dark; but I could see his figure perfectly. He was a tall, straight, broad-shouldered man, with a well-set head and a proud bearing, and he seemed young, by the way he moved and spoke."

"And the girl?"

"She was plump and childish—that I could see plain enough, but whether she was dark or fair, I couldn't tell you."

"Did you hear any name called, during the broken conversation between the two?"

"Oh, yes! I forgot! Once I heard him call her Jennie, and more than once I heard her call him Kightly."

"You are sure those were the names you heard?"

"Certain sure."

"Did you hear any other names?"

"No, none."

"No surnames?"

"No, unless Kightly was a surname. It don't sound much like a Christian one."

"And this is all you have to say about this case?"

"Yes, sir, I do think it is every single thing. And I would like to go home now, for I feel very miserable, and if the doctor knew I had come out he would be very mad with me! But you see I heard them all talking about the stabbing, and how she did it herself, which I knew wasn't

true, because I had seen the man do it, though I was afraid to set 'em right, or to say anything until I could get here to give information at headquarters first of all."

"Well, you are at liberty to go now, Mrs. Marshall. And when you are wanted you will be found at No. 29 Quarry Street?"

"Second floor, front. Yes, sir."

"Dryant," said the chief, "you had better go with this lady. She is too ill to return home alone."

The kindly detective in "plain clothes" offered his stout arm to the pale woman, and took her out to the street cars, and escorted her home.

In half an hour he returned to his post of duty.

"We begin to see light now; eh, Dryant?" inquired the chief, as his subordinate entered the office.

"That's so, captain."

"Here, in the possession of this injured woman, who has given her name as Jennie Montgomery, wife of Kightly Montgomery, are found letters and documents that confirm her statements, and an ivorytype miniature of the gallant officer, with his initials and hers woven together in a monogram. And here comes a woman who gives information that she witnessed the interview between a man called by the girl Kightly, and a girl called by the man Jennie; heard the girl urge him to acknowledge her to be his wife; heard him refuse to do so; heard the girl threaten to expose him, and then—saw the man stab the girl in the breast. All that we have now to do is to find Kightly Montgomery, the husband of the injured girl, the assassin who assaulted her with intent to kill her. Hand me that miniature, Dryant."

The detevtice passed the ivorytype to his chief.

"All we have to do is to find the original of this picture, Dryant."

"Yes, captain; if he is above ground. But have you read the statement I took down from the lips of the young woman this morning? You remember she said that she was a widow."

"Yes, she said 'widow'; she meant grass widow."

"She said her husband had been dead six months."

"She said 'dead'; she meant dead to her. It was a pious

prevarication. She wanted to shield him from the penalty of his crime—'her husband,' the 'father of her child,' and all that. You know these sort of women, Dryant."

"I guess you are right, captain."

"Now you must take this miniature and have it photographed, and send copies to the police of the principal cities all over the country. Though the girl should continue reticent, we will catch our man by means of these photographs."

Dryant took the tvorytype and went on his errand.

So did he urge and interest the photographers at the establishment which he favored that by the time the chief was at his post the next morning the detective was able to lay before him four packets, each containing twenty-five well-executed photographs of the miniature.

More than three-quarters of these were soon enveloped and distributed to the four quarters of the sphere, with letters of instructions to the police of other cities.

"Now I wish you to take the ivorytype to the hospital, and give it into the hands of Mrs. Gilbert, that she may show it to Jennie Montgomery for identification. There is not the slightest room for doubt that this is the likeness of the miscreant Kightly Montgomery, but still it would be satisfactory to have her identification of the fellow."

"Yes," said Dryant, and he went immediately upon the errand. He arrived at the hospital, and sent an attendant to call Nurse Gilbert.

The good woman soon came into the visitors' waiting room, where she found the detective.

"Well, Mrs. Gilbert, how is the poor girl this morning?" he inquired.

"Famous! The constitution of that young person is something wonderful. With that wound in her breast, and her new-born babe, and her sorrow and her trials, any other woman would have been dead and buried by this time. But she!—why, she is getting along splendidly! The wound is healing, the fever has left her, she is not fretting about anything, and seems to care for nothing under the sun but her baby," said Mrs. Gilbert; and then, being a fat little woman, she stopped talking to recover her breath.

"It is queer. No heart-break about her for being deceived and deserted."

"Not a bit of it. She is wrapped up in her baby. The sun and moon rise and set with the baby. I have heard about babies cutting daddies out before, but I never saw such a complete example of it as this."

"I have got something to show you, Mrs. Gilbert," said the detective, taking the miniature from his pocket.

"Eh! What is it?" eagerly inquired the nurse.

"It's a picture of

" 'The ranting dog, the daddy o' it.' "

"What do you mean?" demanded the nurse, who had never even heard of Robert Burns.

"I mean a miniature of Kightly Montgomery, the scoundrel who tried to kill his young wife."

"Oh, let me see it!"

Dryant passed on the miniature.

"And what a pity! Such a handsome man!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert, gazing admiringly on the miniature.

The officer shrugged his shoulders in contempt, and then said:

"I wish you to show that picture to Mrs. Montgomery, and ask her whose it is."

"Yes, I will. But do you intend to come up into the ward and eavesdrop to listen to every word she has to say to me, though she doesn't intend it for you to hear?" rather sarcastically inquired the nurse.

"Yes, ma'am, I do, if the doctor will let me. Mine is not a very pleasant duty, Mrs. Gilbert, but the ends of justice must be served," said the detective, deprecatingly.

"And the ends of justice is to get the 'original,' as you call it, of this picture into the State prison for ten or twenty years or so?"

"Precisely."

"And he such a handsome man! She'll never do it, Mr. Officer, never! She'll never give him away, never! You may lay in wait and listen, and I may coax, and argue, and cross-question until doomsday, but she will never give him up—never!"

"I hope you are not taking sides with such a villain, Mrs. Gilbert," gravely observed the detective.

"Who? I? Never! You know I tried my best to make

her give him up, and even to trap her into doing it. But then, it is true, I did not know he was—such a handsome man!"

"Where's the doctor?" abruptly inquired the disgusted officer.

"In his office there. You know where to find him."

Dryant crossed the room and the hall, and went into the doctor's office, explained his errand, made his request and obtained leave to go into the ward where pretty Jennie Montgomery lay recovering her strength and rejoicing in her babe.

He then rejoined Mrs. Gilbert, and both west up to the ward. The detective came in, keeping close to the north wall, out of the range of Jennie Montgomery's vision.

Mrs. Gilbert went up to the side of the bed.

"Feeling pretty well, still, dear?" inquired the nurse.

"Oh, yes, thank you, very well," smiled Jennie.

"And baby?"

"Sleeping so sweetly. Ah, nurse, how came I to be so blessed as to have a baby? What is a fortune compared to a baby? Ah! what is a kingdom compared to a baby? Nurse, I mean to turn over a new leaf from this day, and try to be worthy of my baby," said Jennie, her face bright with smiles and tears.

" 'A new leaf,' honey. Why, I hope——"

"Oh, I haven't been so very, very wicked, nurse. But I have been vain, and selfish, and ungrateful to my own dear parents. I never knew how much so until this little angel came from heaven to enlighten me."

"I have got something to show you," said Mrs. Gilbert, taking the miniature from its case.

But Jennie scarcely heard her. She was absorbed in her own thoughts.

"Nurse," she said, "you have been very good to me, and I want to tell you something. I want to confess to you, and get it off my mind. Nurse, I ran away to get married —ran away from my parents—from my dear father, who loved me as the apple of his eye, and from my darling, tender, loving mother, who loved me—who loved me as I love my precious baby. Oh, after all, I have been very, very, very wicked," said Jennie, covering her face with her hands.

"Don't excite yourself, dear. It's no more than what I thought; no, nor as much as I feared. There's many and many a foolish girl has done the same, poor child, and rued it all her life. But you, when you get well, can go back to your father and mother and be forgiven; for surely if the prodigal son was forgiven for going away and wasting his substance in riotous living, a poor, little prodigal daughter might be pardoned for being prodigal only of her heart's love, poor thing."

"They have forgiven me. I wrote to them from Scotland, where I was married. And, oh, such a loving letter they wrote back. Not asking me to leave my husband and return to them—they never would have done that; but forgiving both of us, and asking us to come back. But Kightly said he had business in London, and would not take me back, and so I have never seen them since. But I have written to them regularly, though I have never told them the straits to which I have been reduced. They think that my husband has been with me all this time."

"But why didn't you go back alone to see your parents, if he would not go with you?"

"Because I was so infatuated with him that I wouldn't leave him, even for a day, to run down to see them. And when he left London, I followed him."

"And you followed him to this country," said the nurse.

The young wife started, looked up suddenly, but made no reply. She seemed to realize that she had fallen into a trap.

"And you followed him to this country?"

"I cannot answer that question. I am very grateful to you, nurse, but I cannot answer every question you ask me."

"Well, anyway, dear, if you haven't got him——"

"I told you I lost my husband six months ago," said Jennie.

"I know you did, dear. But if you have lost the father, you have got the child."

"Oh, yes, my heavenly baby!"

"And you have got his miniature. See here!" said the nurse, holding the ivorytype before Jennie's eyes, while the detective, from his lurking place, leaned forward to catch, if possible, a glimpse of the girl's face.

She was staring at the ivorytype in silence. Suddenly she seized it, and demanded:

"Where did you get this?"

"It came with your things from Vevay Street."

"But who dared to meddle with my things?"

"The police, my dear. It was their duty; but your property is safe in their hands; and I brought you the picture of your husband, thinking you might like to have it with you."

"How do you know this is a picture of my husband?" demanded Jennie, with a startled look.

"Oh, I reckon it is. You wouldn't be keeping the miniature of any other man but your husband."

Jennie was silent. She held out her hand for the case, put the miniature in it, clasped it, and put it—not under her pillow, from whence it might be abstracted, but under the coverlets, in the bed with her.

"It is the picture of your husband, is it not?" persisted the nurse.

"I decline to answer. You have all been very good to me, and have saved my life and my precious baby's life, and the Lord knows that I am very, very grateful. But I say it is not fair to search my boxes and ferret out my keepsakes, and try to entrap me into saying things. And my poor brain so weak, too, from all I have gone through, that I have no more sense than a kitten," said the persecuted patient, on the verge of tears.

"Indeed, dear, I don't want to entrap you, and I promise you this: that I will not ask you another question about anything except your state of health, which it is my duty to do," said Mrs. Gilbert, sympathetically.

Jennie held out her hand, and said:

"I am not blaming you, nor any of the hospital people. I should be a thankless wretch to do that. Or to feel anything but the deepest, everlasting gratitude to them that saved my life and my precious baby's and saved my soul as well! For, oh, if I had died in a rage that night! Oh, I was in a hateful, fiendish temper that night when I met—There! I must not speak another word. I must shut up my lips tight," said Jennie. And she turned away her head and grasped the miniature case under the coverlet.

"I will leave you to take some rest, dear. Try to sleep,"

said Mrs. Gilbert, as she straightened the bedclothes, and then turned to leave the ward.

At the door she was joined by the officer.

"Well, I hope you are satisfied. You heard all that passed," said Mrs. Gilbert, with some asperity.

"Yes, I am satisfied. Although she would not verbally admit that her husband was the murderous assailant and the original of that picture, yet every tone and look testified to the facts," replied Dryant, putting his notebook and pencil in his pocket.

"She will not let you have the miniature again," said the nurse, with some satisfaction.

"We do not want it," retorted the officer, with even more satisfaction, thinking of the hundred perfect photos in the possession of the police and distributed all over the country.

He left the hospital and made his report at police headquarters.

Prompt measures were taken. A watch was placed at the entrance and exit of every railway station and steamboat landing in the city, and every police officer was furnished with a photograph of the man wanted. And it was not many hours before an arrest was made which created a sensation.

CHAPTER XXV

"WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?"

On the morning when Cleve Stuart took an early leave of his wife and started on the first train for New York, there occurred on the road an accident which was instantly telegraphed up and down the line, and stopped all travel on the particular rails for an hour.

The obstruction was at last removed and the cars went on. But they reached the city an hour and ten minutes behind time.

Cleve Stuart hastened from the train to a Fourth Avenue car and rode down as far as Chatham Street. There he got out and went in search of a pawnbroker's shop. He had determined not to sell his watch. He could not bear to part with an heirloom left him by his father. He resolved to

pawn it, and, if necessary, everything else that he could part with to raise money to pay his last month's board and bring his wife to the city.

He passed one or two shops, discouraged by their grimy and poverty-stricken appearance; but at last he found one that looked a little more respectable, and he entered it.

There was no one in the shop at the time The pawnbroker, standing behind the counter, was a decent-looking old man.

Cleve Stuart bowed—he always paid respect to age—and laid his watch and chain on the counter, and asked:

"How much will you lend me on this?"

The pawnbroker took it up, opened it on both sides and examined it carefully. It was a heavy gold watch of the very finest workmanship, thickly studded with costly gems. There was a legend in the family that it had once belonged to the "Young Pretender" and it was valued at two hundred guineas. Cleve Stuart thought it might be worth from five to seven hundred dollars. The pawnbroker was a connoisseur. Perhaps he knew the value of that watch better than the owner did; perhaps he appreciated it higher. But he was discreet, and he answered Cleve Stuart by another question:

"How much do you want for it?"

"Just as much as you can possibly lend me."

"One hundred dollars."

"The jewels alone are worth twice that sum," said Cleve.

"But I am not buying the bauble," replied the pawnbroker.

Stuart took up his watch and turned to leave the shop.

"If you don't succeed in getting more money on it, please come back to me, sir. I would like to lend you a hundred on it, though I cannot lend you more."

"Very well, if I cannot do better I will return here."

And Stuart went out into the street.

And nearly all that day he spent in going from one pawnshop to another in search of better terms, but without success. The highest offered him was eighty dollars, and at this crisis of his affairs twenty more was an object. Late in the afternoon he returned to the first shop.

"So you have come back," said the pawnbroker. "I thought you would."

Stuart laid the jeweled watch that had belonged to the "Young Pretender" down on the counter, and received the promised money and the ticket.

Then he drew a seal ring from the little finger of his left hand and laid it down, asking:

"How much will you lend on that?"

The pawnbroker took up the ring and examined it carefully. It was a richly chased, heavy gold ring, set with fine topaz, on which was engraved the letter S, with the family crest, a lion *passant*.

"How much do you want?" inquired the money-lender, with his invariable parrying question.

"As in the case of the last item—as much as you can possibly lend me on it."

"Five dollars."

"It is worth five times as much."

"To the owner, doubtless, but the engraved initial and crest spoils it for anybody else. I cannot advance more than five dollars on it."

"Very well; then take it," said Stuart, for he was now in a desperate hurry to catch the next train.

The pawnbroker laid down a greenback and a ticket, which Stuart seized and thrust into his pocket. He hurried out of the shop.

He wanted to buy something to take to Palma; but there was no time. He was also very hungry, for he had eaten nothing since the seven o'clock breakfast at Lull's; but there was no time to be lost if he was to catch the train.

He hailed a Fourth Avenue car, and boarded it, and rode up to the Grand Central Depot. He had a return ticket, so he rushed into the station past the ticket office, and to the gate, just to have it slammed in his face! The 7 P. M. train was starting.

If there is an aggravation more aggravating than any other aggravation in this world it is to have those gates slammed in one's face just as one has arrived out of breath to catch that train which is just off.

Stuart turned back, and threw himself upon one of the seats to recover breath. There was quite a large number of people disappointed as well as himself.

"And now there is no other train that stops at Lull's until nine-thirty. Two hours and a half to wait. And

Palma expects me by this train. She must be disappointed and may be anxious." Then he remembered her parting words:

"Dear Cleve, you have never been to the city for a day since we married. Now you go on business; but please amuse yourself; don't hurry back on my account; go to the opera, or any other nice place, even if you have to stay all night at a hotel. I shall not be uneasy."

These, or words to this effect, had been her last charge.

"Dear, confiding, unselfish child! But she will be uneasy all the same. I must go and telegraph her. I hope the office will not be closed at the station, and that they will send a messenger up to the house to-night with the dispatch. But the house is three miles over the hills!" he reflected, with a sigh.

Nevertheless, he hurried to the telegraph office and sent the following dispatch:

"To Mrs. Cleve Stuart, Pine Mountain House, Lull's station, H. R. R. R. Missed the 7 P. M. Will come by the 9.30. C. S."

"Two hours and a quarter still to wait! If it had not been for that infernal breakdown on the rails which delayed us for an hour, I should have had time to get through all my business and to catch my train," he growled, as he left the office.

Stuart was very hungry, and fasting had never been a means of grace with him.

He went into the nearest restaurant, sat down at a table, and ordered a cup of coffee and a porterhouse beefsteak. In a reasonable time they were brought him, with all the accessories of fried potatoes, rolls, butter, pickles and so forth.

He made a very satisfactory supper off these, paid his bill, and looked at his watch—not the pretender's watch, but a modest little white-faced timepiece held by a black silk cord.

"An hour and three-quarters still to wait! I will have time to go down Broadway and buy something for little Palma," he said to himself, feeling in a much more amiable humor than he did when he was fasting and hungry.

He hailed a Broadway stage and rode down to the neighborhood of all the great dry goods and fancy bazars, and got out at one of them.

Walked through all the dazzling and bewitching rooms; did not wonder that women lost their heads and went into ruinous extravagances in such places; admired and coveted —for Palma—many fine things; but ended in buying a box of pretty pocket handkerchiefs.

Then he looked at his watch again. It was just half-past eight.

"An hour yet to wait. How slowly time passes when one is simply waiting for a train, with nothing on earth to do!"

Then he strolled into the reading room of a hotel near at hand. The evening papers lay on all the tables, or were in the hands of the occupants.

Cleve Stuart took up one—the *Vigil*—and sat down to look over it. There was no political question at issue just then. The financial column had no attraction for the impecunious reader. He turned to the general news items, and his eyes were first caught by the following paragraph:

"A Clew to the Quarry Street Mystery—*The police have obtained a certain clew to the assassin of the girl, Jennie Montgomery, who is now pronounced out of danger, but firmly refuses to give the name of her would-be murderer, who is supposed to be a certain Kightly Montgomery, an English adventurer of many aliases.*"

Stuart read that carelessly, little knowing how heavy a stake he had in the matter. There were so many other assaults, homicides, tragedies, reported in that paper, and in every paper, that one more or less seemed to make little difference.

Presently he walked out, hailed a Broadway stage, and rode up to the depot, saying to himself that he had as well wait the remaining half hour there as elsewhere, and that by so doing he would be sure to catch the nine-thirty.

He entered the waiting-room, bought another paper from the news counter, and sat down under a gas jet to read it.

His face was in a good light from above, such as a photographer uses in taking his pictures.

Stuart did not notice that there were two police officers standing opposite to him on the other side of the room, and

curiously watching him, and examining a photograph, which they passed from one to the other.

Stuart laid down his paper for a moment, and his face stood out in a brighter light.

The two policemen compared the face and the photograph.

"That is the man," said Dryant, who was one of them.

"Not a doubt of it," assented his companion.

Again they compared the photograph with the face. The likeness between the two was perfect, though it was entirely accidental.

At this moment the gates were thrown open to the train, and all the people who were going by it hurried thither.

The two policemen walked toward their prey.

Stuart, unconscious of the fate awaiting him, arose, rolled his paper and put it into his pocket, put on his hat, took up his box of handkerchiefs, and prepared to walk toward the gate. Then he was suddenly stopped. A policeman's hand clapped him on the shoulder.

He turned sharply, surprised and angry, and confronted the officer, who said:

"Kightly Montgomery, you are wanted!"

"What does this mean?" haughtily demanded Stuart, dashing off the contaminating hand.

"I arrest you for assault, with intent to kill your wife, Jennie Montgomery!"

CHAPTER XXVI

"THOU ART THE MAN"

"ARRESTED?" I! For assault, with intent to kill—my wife!" exclaimed Cleve Stuart, staring at the policeman in extreme amazement. "Why, man, are you mad or——"

Then the truth suddenly dawned upon him. He was mistaken for the would-be murderer of Jennie Montgomery, of whose pursuit he had read in that evening's paper. He laughed a little, and said, quietly:

"You are mistaken, officer. I——"

"I don't think we are, captain. I think you are our man. We want you to answer the charge of a felonious assault,

with intent to kill your wife. If you are the gentleman you look to be, you will come along with us quietly, without more words," said Dryant, persuasively.

"But, man, I am not Capt. Kightly Montgomery, I tell you. Nor Capt. Anybody else. I am plain Cleve Stuart. Nor has my wife been assaulted by anyone. She is alive and well. And I was on my way to her when you stopped me—confound you!" said the young man, half-amused and half-annoyed at a mistake that was persisted in—one that had made him miss his train, and yet that must, he thought, be set right in a few minutes.

"You must prove that, captain, before we can set you at liberty."

"Take me before some justice of the peace, then, immediately. I can easily prove what I say."

"Sorry to incommode you, captain, but the police courts are all closed, and will not be opened until the usual hour to-morrow."

"Then what in the demon do you mean to do?"

"Sorry to inconvenience you, captain, but we shall have to lock you up until the courts are opend to-morrow."

"But I am not——" began Stuart; and then, remembering how useless and how childish it seemed to deny the false identity they had fixed upon him, he stopped and held his peace.

"And I reckon we had better be moving on now," continued Dryant.

By this time a small crowd had gathered. All the people who had remained in the waiting room after the departure of the last train were standing around the little group, and they were all staring and whispering, and getting the facts mixed, as busy people will who read the daily record of crime in the newspapers, and have, besides, all their own private affairs to think of.

"He's the cashier of that savings bank who ran away with the money," whispered one.

"The man who poisoned his father-in-law, to get his cash."

"The fellow who killed his wife on Quarry Street."

And so on.

"Come!" said Dryant, drawing the young man's hand in a friendly manner through his arm.

And Stuart, not unwilling to escape the rude crowd, followed with the officers.

"Policemen, this mistake will be set right in the morning?"

"Of course, sir," said Grey, sarcastically.

"Let us hope so, sir," said Dryant, sincerely.

"But in the meantime where am I to pass the night?" demanded Stuart.

"At police headquarters, captain."

"Then I ask it as a favor—for which I am willing to pay well, if necessary—that you will give me a clean bed, in a cell to myself," said the young man, not dreading false accusation or imprisonment so much as—squalor!

"All right, captain! You shall have all that, 'without money and without price,'" said Dryant, heartily, for the good fellow began to think that, after all, a mistake might have been made; though it would never do for him now to act upon that afterthought, and release his prisoner, on whom he kept a firm but unobtrusive hold as they left the depot.

The crowd still whispering, following and making mistakes.

To escape the nuisance the policemen hailed a carriage and put their prisoner inside.

Dryant took his seat beside young Stuart.

Grey mounted beside the hackman.

"Will you kindly stop at the next telegraph office I must send a dispatch to my wife. She expects me by the train that has just left," said the young man.

"Certainly, captain! Hello! Grey! Tell the driver to pull up at the telegraph office across the street there! All right, captain," cordially replied Dryant.

"And will you do me another favor?" inquired Stuart.

"Well, if I can, consistently with my duty! What is it, captain?"

"Cease to call me captain. I am not the man you think me, though it is vain to say so now! But as I am not Capt. Kightly Montgomery, you will greatly oblige me by not calling me captain."

"Quite so, sir, and I hope you will be able to prove it

to-morrow. Here we are, sir! Now maybe you will not like to go in yourself, under present circumstances. If you wish, I will send in for a blank, and you can write your telegram here," said Dryant, as the hack drew up before the office.

"Thank you," said Stuart, assenting to the proposal, as the second policeman came down from his seat and opened the hack door.

"What's up now? Do you want to send a telegram, Dryant?" he inquired.

"Yes!" said Dryant. "Go in and get a form and bring it here."

Grey darted into the office, and soon returned with a pad of blanks and a black lead pencil, which he handed to Dryant.

"Here you are, cap—sir! I will strike a match taper for you to see to write by," said Dryant, passing the articles over to his prisoner, and then striking a wax light, and holding it near the writer.

Stuart wrote:

"To Mrs. Cleve Stuart, Pine Mountain House, Lull's Station, H. R. R. R.—Am unexpectedly detained. Will return to-morrow noon. C. S."

He passed the pencil and pad, with the dispatch, over to Dryant, who read it, and then handed it to Grey, who also read it and observed:

"Well, he's a cool hand! He acts out his part. But maybe he has got a wife at Lull's, also."

"Here is the money to pay for it," said Stuart, taking a dollar note from his pocketbook, and handing it to Grey, who thereupon turned and went into the office.

In a few minutes he came back, mounted the box, and drove off to the police headquarters.

Arrived there, young Stuart was taken into the chief's office, and given a seat.

Then Dryant said:

"Very sorry, cap—sir! But you know, of course, the regulations. Will you be good enough to turn out your pockets?"

Cleve Stuart's face crimsoned to the edges of his hair;

his impulse was to resist, to level the officer who had offered this affront. But he remembered how vain and foolish would be any such resistance to lawful authority, and he yielded in silence.

"Item—one *portemonnaie,* containing one hundred and two dollars in greenbacks, and some silver change," said Dryant, checking off a list, as Stuart emptied his pockets of their contents. "Item—one bunch of small keys; one memorandum book, blank; one cigar case, two pawn tickets!"

These last items clearly told on Cleve Stuart. Dryant's face changed. "After all, the young man was "a bad lot." He had been to the pawnbroker's. It was. therefore, more than probable that he had killed or attempted to kill his wife, or one of his wives. If a poor, starving ragamuffin were found with pawn tickets on his person, the case might be easily understood as one of extreme necessity; but for a gentlemanly-looking man, in a fashionably-cut suit of clothes, to be found with pawn tickets in his pocket, clearly convicted him, as a member of the swell mob, a thief possibly, a swindler probably, an intentional murderer certainly.

The police took possession of everything found in the pockets of the prisoner, and made a list and record of them.

Yet, though Dryant was now inclined to think the very worst of the accused man, he could not help pitying him as if he were innocent. So much truer are often the instincts of the heart than the reasoning of the brain.

"It will be all right in the morning, cap—sir, I hope. And this is only for a night," he said, as he led his prisoner down to the cells, and unlocked one of them.

"Yes, my friend; but do you understand what it is to a decent man to be locked up in one of these, even for a night?" inquired Stuart, as he entered the cell.

"Pretty bad, sir, I can well believe; but you are not the first gentleman, nor the first innocent man, I have had to turn the key on. And the place is clean and solitary as you wished," replied Dryant.

"Yes, I see it is, and thank you," replied Stuart, as he seated himself on the side of the hard and narrow bunk.

"And now, if there's anything I can get for you before I go, this is the time to name it; for it is after ten o'clock, and I am going home."

"There is nothing, thank you."

"Then, good-night; and I wish you well out of this."

"Thank you. Good-night," said Stuart.

The policeman locked the cell door, and left the hall, giving the key to the night watchman as he passed.

Cleve Stuart looked around him.

Yes, the cell was clean; the walls newly whitewashed, and smelling of fresh lime; floor newly scrubbed, and smelling of suds; grated iron door in front; grated hole in the wall by way of a window in the back; a hard. narrow bunk, with a hard, narrower mattress, covered with a clean, coarse blanket. That was all.

"Only the dead are safe. Who can say what a day may bring forth? If anyone had told me this morning that I should spend this night in prison on a criminal charge, I should have hooted at him, laughed him to scorn, or knocked him down, as the circumstances might have required. Yet here I am. Come, Cleve, my boy, be a man! It is only for a night, and perhaps the experience may be worth the inconvenience," he said to himself, with a laugh. Then he looked through his grated door out upon a lobby, lighted by a large iron gasolier, that hung from the ceiling nearly opposite his cell. Under this a watchman sat reading an evening paper. The floor was of flagstones, the walls of brick, whitewashed, and with a row of grated iron doors on each side, leading into cells similar to the one occupied by Stuart, and all lighted through the gratings by the gasolier in the midst.

Cleve Stuart pulled off his coat, and threw himself on the outside of the bed. The night was warm, but the cell was well ventilated through its grated door and window.

Stuart was not at all anxious on his own account. He knew he was safe, and might have slept but for the novelty of his position and the constant disturbances caused by the bringing in of prisoners, that went on all through the night. These were generally what the watchman on duty called D. D.'s. It is needless to say that in this case the initials did not represent a theological college degree, but quite an opposite condition—of offense against law and religion; in short, "drunk and disorderly."

Most of these D. D.'s continued to be D. D.'s after their incarceration; and some sang roaring, convivial songs, and

some cursed and swore, while others wept and moaned, and others slept heavily and snored sonorously.

Novel and revolting as the scene was, it was not altogether uninteresting or uninstructive as one phase of life to a student of human nature.

So the wakeful hours of that noisy night wore slowly away.

And, meanwhile, how fared it with the anxiously waiting young wife at the Pine Mountain House?

CHAPTER XXVII

A NIGHT'S MYSTERY

When Palma was left alone on the morning of Cleve's departure for the city, she found the time pass heavily.

She looked over all the contents of the bureau, the wardrobe and the big traveling trunk, but found not a stitch to set in anything. It was an easy matter to keep the clothes of two moderate young people in order, when there was nothing else to do, that Mrs. Pole had undertaken and effected all that, and had much leisure on her hands besides.

Palma could not even knit, for all her wool was used up; nor read, for she had no new books nor papers.

Perhaps it was her want of occupation that made her more observant of other people; for when Mrs. Pole, after having eaten her breakfast with her gossips, the housekeeper and waitresses, came into the chamber, Palma, looking at her, perceived a pallor on her face and a strange expression in her eyes that she had not noticed before.

"Why, Poley," she said, "what is the matter with you? Are you not well?"

"Yes, dear, well enough; only I think I sleep too heavy, and feel kinder queer in the morning, as if I couldn't just remember at first where I was, or even who I was," replied the woman.

"Why Poley, how strange! What do you think can be the cause of it?"

"Suppers, child! Suppers!"

"Suppers!"

"Yes, honey! Me and Mrs. Mooze, the housekeeper, and the girls do have late suppers in the dining-room, when all the family and boarders are gone to bed. It is after we wash up the general dishes—and, oh! isn't there a lot of them! And then we eat up things that won't be good the next day, like cold puddings and bits of pastry and the like, because it is a sin to let anything go to waste. And, child, it may be very well for them, they are so young and strong; even Mrs. Mooze can't be more than thirty; but I am getting old and deliky and can't stand it, and am going to give up late suppers offen cold puddin' and moldy pie!"

"So I would, if I were you, Poley. You can have some milk punch with me before you go to bed. That won't hurt you," said Palma.

"Thanky', honey; that wouldn't hurt me, sure. What do you want to do to-day?"

"What to do? I want to work, Poley. I despise myself for my idleness and uselessness!"

"But you haven't got anything to do."

"That's it! Well, I will take this volume of Shakespeare and go and sit out on the piazza and watch for the stage to come back from the depot. If one has nothing new to read, one can always fall back on Shakespeare," said Palma.

And she took the book and walked out, followed by Mrs. Pole carrying her shawl and pushing the easy-chair before her.

Soon Palma was comfortably seated, had opened the book at random, and was as deeply absorbed in the scene between Helena and the Countess of Rousillon, in "All's Well That Ends' Well," as if she had never read the play before.

It was, as yet, too early for many of the ladies to come out on the porch. Most of them had not yet breakfasted; for they were accommodated at Lull's with the morning meal at any hour between six and twelve.

Palma sat alone when the stage drove up from the depot, empty; for the season was over at Lull's—at least the season of new arrivals.

"The gentlemen met their train and got off all right?" inquired Palma, caring but for one gentleman in the company, or in the world.

"Oh, yes, miss—mum, I should say. They always does. What should hinder of them?" laughed John, the English

emigrant boy, who drove the stage, as he turned his horses' heads toward the stable.

In twenty minutes, with fresh horses, he had to go and meet the boat.

There were three up trains and three down trains stopped at Lull's Station every day, and there was one up steamboat stopped at Lull's Landing, morning and evening. And the stage went to meet every one of them, on the chance of getting a fare, whether there should be any passengers or not, all through the season, until the final closing of the house on the first of October.

Palma saw the stage drive off, and turned her attention to Helena and the countess.

Presently she was conscious that some one came and sat down near her.

She looked up and saw a sweet old lady, for whom she had formed a warm attachment—Mrs. Shepherd, the wife of the Rev. Dr. Shepherd who had performed the marriage ceremony between herself—Palma—and Cleve Stuart.

Mrs. Shepherd was a small, thin woman, with the fairest complexion and the bluest eyes, as well as the finest, silveriest hair that ever went with seventy-five years of age.

She always dressed in the softest gray silk or cashmere gowns, with a white Shetland wool shawl around her shoulders, and a fine lace cap, trimmed with delicate shades of pink, blue or mauve ribbon.

She had now a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles on her nose, and a little basket full of lightly piled lace on her lap. And both meant work.

"Good-morning, my dear," she said, as Palma looked up.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Shepherd. I am glad to see you out this morning."

"Thank you, my dear. Yes, the fine morning tempted me; and, besides, there is so much more and better light here, for my fine work, than there is in our room, where the trees on the outside, though very cool and pleasant, make it a little too dark and shady."

"Lace-making," observed Palma, a little doubtfully, looking at the fluffy clouds that overflowed the workbasket.

"Oh, no, dear; lace-mending, after the simplest fashion," said the minister's wife.

"Oh, do let me mend this for you!" exclaimed Palma, springing up in her eagerness, and dropping her book.

"Why, my dear child, why should I trouble you?"

"Oh, it will be no trouble, and I like to do that sort of work so much. I know every lace stitch, and can mend every break in the same stitch of the pattern that is broken so that it can never be detected. Do let me try!"

For all answer, and for all thanks, the old lady smiled and lifted the basket of lace from her own lap and placed it on that of her companion.

Then she drew a half-finished stocking from her pocket, and began to knit, watching Palma as she worked.

"Why, what a treasure you would be to a lace fancier, my child! You fill out a pattern perfectly, whether it is a leaf or a flower, open or close work Now I know of but one way to darn lace, and that is just as I should darn a stocking," she said, at length.

"My first friend and second mother, the late Mrs. Judge Barrn, taught me all manner of lace work," replied Palma, simply.

"It is almost a lost art to know how to mend lace as you do. Here comes the stage back again. I wonder if there are any passengers? No," said Mrs. Shepherd, as the vehicle rolled up to the house, threw out the mail bag, and rolled away to the stables to feed the horses.

The elder and the younger lady sat on the piazza until two o'clock in the afternoon, when they went in to luncheon.

After that Mrs. Pole took possession of Palma, and said:

"Now you have got to lie down and take a nap just the same as if Mr. Stuart was here to see that you do it."

"Yes, Poley; I will. Let me speak to Mrs. Shepherd first," replied Palma. And she went to the old lady, who had just come out of the dining-room and was crossing the hall, and said:

"There are a few more pieces in the basket to mend. If you will trust them to me I will take them to my room."

"With much pleasure and thankfulness, dear child, I will," replied the minister's wife, who then passed upstairs to take her own afternoon nap.

As Palma had not slept well on the preceding night, and had, besides, risen earlier than usual that morning, her *siesta* was rather a long one, and it was after five when she

awoke. Then she took a bath, and afterward made what was, for her, rather an elaborate toilet, wearing her white mull dress freshly done up, and blush roses on her bosom and in her curly black hair—for was not her husband coming back to her like a bridegroom after a whole day's absence?

She went out on the piazza, where all the ladies in the house were assembled to receive the gentlemen, who were to return from town in time for dinner.

Presently the stage rolled into the yard, filled with all the men who had gone away in the morning, except Cleve Stuart.

They jumped down from their seats, and hurried up on the piazza to greet wives and children.

"You did not expect Mr. Stuart, then, by this stage?" said Mrs. Shepherd to Palma.

"Oh, no. He will leave New York by the seven o'clock train," replied Palma.

"That is the last train the stage goes to meet, I believe."

"Yes. If any passengers come by a later train for the Mountain House they have to hire the railway hacks."

The dinner gong sounded, and they all went into the house.

An hour later they were all out on the piazza again. It was now near sunset, and the stage was there, ready for its last trip to the station.

Old Mr. Lull came up to where Palma sat looking eager and impatient, and said:

"My dear, the coach is going down to the station empty. Would you like to take your maid and ride down the mountain and meet your husband, who, I hear, is expected by this train?"

"Oh, thank you so much. How kind you are to think of it, Mr. Lull. Yes, indeed, I should like to go," joyfully exclaimed Palma.

"Run in, then, and put on your hat," said the old man.

Palma flew into the room calling her attendant.

"Poley! Poley, dear! Do you want to take a ride? Come, get ready. We are going to drive down to the station to meet Cleve. Make haste, the stage is waiting," she exclaimed, as she hastily unfastened her white dress, dropped it, and began to put on her crimson cashmere suit.

Mrs. Pole came up to her, bewildered and slow to understand what she was to do.

However, she helped Palma to change her dress, and then she herself got ready for the drive and both went out and took their seats in the stage.

Palma was as pleased as any child would have been with the drive down the wooded mountain side.

"How surprised Cleve will be to find us there to meet him. Oh! I hope we shall get there before the train comes in! I hope he won't have to wait for us. John!" she called to the driver.

"Yes, miss—mum!" replied the stage man.

"He always calls me Miss Mum, Poley," whispered Palma, in the gayety of her heart.

"That is because you do look so young, dear. He begins with miss, and then he remembers that you are ma'am," replied Mrs. Pole.

"John, shall we get to the station before the train comes in?" inquired Palma.

John, who had overheard a part of the conversation, took time to collect his thoughts and correct his phrases, answered, slowly and carefully:

"Yes, mum. Safe to do so, mum. Get there fifteen to twenty minutes afore the train gets in, mum."

"That will do. Thank you, John," said Palma, laughing.

The stage driver touched his hat, although the lady so honored could not see the salute, and muttered something in which the only distinguishable word was "mum," and drove on.

They had a lovely drive through the woods down the mountain side, and arrived in good time at the station.

A freight train thundered by on its way south.

John held his horses until the noise and smoke were far away, and then drove to the door of the waiting room, where his two passengers got out.

An express train, going north, shot past with a shriek.

"Now, the next un 'ill be our'n, m—m—mum," said John.

The two women sat down in the waiting-room. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and then came the whirr and rush of the coming train.

Palma and Mrs. Pole went out and stood upon the platform.

"Oh! won't Cleve be surprised to see us? But will he be glad? Will he approve?" inquired Palma, her eyes radiant with delight, yet with a tone of anxiety in her voice.

"Yes, dear, he will be just astonished! but he will also be overjoyed to find that you could ride so far and look so well," replied Mrs. Pole, but her words were lost in the thunder of the train that dashed up, stopped, bellowed for half a minute, and shot forward on its way north.

No one had got off.

"Why, what does it all mean, Poley?" demanded Palma, with a frightened look.

"Oh, just that he hasn't come by this train, but will come by a later one. Don't be worried. We have had our pleasant drive, anyhow. And we'll have our pleasant drive back. And look here, my dear child—if you are going to begin married life by going into fits every time your husband stays away longer than you like, it's a poor prospect before you for peace and happiness," said the experienced matron.

"Now, Poley, you know me better than that! And I know the very worst thing—not that a wife could do to a husband, but that any human being could do to another—would be to try to fetter his free will. I begged Cleve to stay in New York to-night and go to the opera if he pleased, without fancying that I should be anxious. But he declared that he preferred to come back here. That is the reason why I expected him."

At this moment the stage driver came in and said:

"Ready to start, m—mum."

"John!" called a loud voice from the window of the telegraph office.

"Well, wot do yer want?" inquired the driver, going toward the caller.

"Here's a tel. for your place, and the office boy's gone home for the night. Can you take it?"

"Yes, I reckon so. Who's it fur?" inquired John.

The operator said something indistinguishable by the two women, and handed out an envelope to the man, who brought it straight to Palma, saying:

"It's fur you—mum!"

"A telegram!" exclaimed Palma, with a little quiver of apprehension, as she tore open the envelope and read aloud:

"Grand Central Depot, New York City—August —. Missed the seven train. Will come by the nine-thirty.

"C. S."

"That's it, Poley! Well, as you say, we have had a delightful drive down the mountain, and we will have a delightful drive up it! Come; we will take our seats," said Palma.

They went out and got into the stage.

John, who was already on the box, started his horses and they went off at a spanking pace.

The drive back to the Mountain House was under a star-light sky.

When they reached Lull's they found all the boarders out on the piazza, enjoying the splendor of the summer night.

"Mr. Stuart telegraphed to me that he had missed the train, but would come by the next one," Palma said, in explanation, to the few friends who were interested in her.

"Ah! that will be the half-past nine from New York. I'll send Jake with the dogcart to meet him," said old Mr. Lull.

Now Jake was his grandson and bookkeeper.

"I thank you very much, Mr. Lull," said Palma, earnestly; and then she suffered Mrs. Pole to coax her in. She bowed good-night to the friends on the piazza and entered her chamber through one of the front French windows.

"Now, my dear, you just undress and go to bed."

"I cannot, Poley. If the telegram had told me that he was going to stay all night in New York I should go to bed and to sleep, but as he says he is coming to-night I must sit up and wait for him."

"He will be properly vexed if you do."

"No, he will not, Poley. I will take off my dress and my boots and put on a wrapper and slippers and recline in in my easy-chair, with my feet on the footstool, and so I shall rest very well until eleven o'clock. And he will be here by that time."

Mrs. Pole shook her head in silent disapproval; but she helped her young charge to change her dress for a wrapper,

her boots for slippers, and seated her comfortably in the resting-chair with her feet on the hassock.

Then Mrs. Pole turned down the light of the kerosene lamp and stretched herself on the sofa to rest and doze.

All was still and dark in the room, yet Palma neither "slumbered nor slept." She could hear everything that passed on the piazza outside—the chatter and the laughter; the mutual good-nights between those who retired earlier and those who stayed later outside.

At last she heard the dogcart roll up to the door and the last words between old Mr. Lull and Jake before the latter jumped into the cart and drove off.

Then she heard the hall clock strike ten. She knew that it would take an hour to drive to and from the station and that the dogcart would return about eleven o'clock.

She wished to speak to her attendant and tell her this; but that worthy woman was fast asleep on the sofa, and Palma would not disturb her.

How still the house now was! Everyone had come in from the piazza and retired to their rooms.

How slowly passed the hour of waiting!

Palma resolutely closed her eyes and tried to go, in amagination, with the messenger to the depot. She succeeded so well that she went into dreamland instead.

How or when she slipped to sleep she could never exactly tell.

But she knew she was waked up by the arrival of the dog-cart and voices outside.

She started up and went to the door of her chamber.

The hall was lighted by one lamp from the ceiling, and Mr. Lull and his grandson were standing within the hall door, talking. Jake was saying:

"No, sir; Mr. Stuart did not come by this train neither. Nobody come by it for this place."

Palma's heart sank and her soul darkened with dread. She stepped forward eagerly and demanded:

"Are you sure that Mr. Stuart did not come and has not been left behind at the station?"

"Certainly sure, Mrs. Stuart. No one came by that train for Lull's. No one got off it. I stayed in the waiting-room a good ten minutes after the train had passed."

"Oh! Oh! Oh! What has happened?" moaned Palma,

wringing her hands. "But the telegraph office, Mr. Jacob! Was there a telegram for me?"

"The office closes at eight o'clock, ma'am," replied Jake.

"Oh, what shall I do in this dreadful suspense?" moaned Palma, wringing her hands.

The commotion had waked up Mrs. Pole, who now came from the chamber.

"What is the matter, child?" she inquired.

"Oh, dear Poley, he has not come back! He has not come back!"

"Well, dear heart, don't be so distressed. He will be here to-morrow morning."

"Oh! how do I know that? How do I know that? How do I know what has happened to him? If he had not telegraphed that he had missed the seven o'clock train, and would come by the nine-thirty, I should not feel so anxious. I should only think that he had taken me at my word, and stayed over for the opera. But you see, having missed the seven o'clock train, he took pains to telegraph me that he would come by the nine-thirty."

"Well, but, my dear child, he may have missed the nine-thirty also."

"Oh, no! Having lost one train, he would be sure to secure the next. Oh, no, Poley! Something has happened. I am sure something has happened!" moaned Palma, still wringing and twisting her hands.

"What can have happened, you silly child? He has lost his train again. That's what he has—jawing with some other man about politics, and forgetting how time passed, until it was too late to catch the train, and too late even to telegraph to this office. You must get used to the ways of these aggrawating he-creeturs, and sorter undifferent to 'em, too, if you want to have any peace or happiness in this world. Come in now, child. Don't you see that the old gentleman has closed up the hall and is waiting to put out the light?" inquired Mrs. Pole.

"Yes, I see. I beg your pardon for keeping you up, Mr. Lull," said Palma, penitently.

"Oh, don't say a word, ma'am. I would stay up all night if I could relieve your anxiety," replied the old man, bowing.

"Thank you. You are very kind. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, ma'am."

Palma passed into her room, and, in obedience to her attendant, retired to bed, but she slept no more in her quiet chamber in the Mountain House than did her husband in his cell in the noisy corridor at police headquarters in the

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE NEXT MORNING

CLEVE STUART felt relieved when the hideous night was past, and the prisoners were taken out by squads and carried off to the police court.

Still no one came for him.

At length the cells were all emptied of their noisome inmates.

An hour had passed since the last squad had been taken away, and Cleve Stuart had grown very impatient for his release, when at length Dryant appeared, unlocked the cell door, and said:

"Good-morning, captain. There is a wash-room at the end of the corridor, if you would like to take advantage of it."

"Thank you. I decidedly would like to do so," replied Stuart, rising to follow the officer.

When he had washed his face and hands under a spigot, over a common sink, and arranged his hair with a pocket comb, he turned to his guard, and asked:

"When am I to have a hearing?"

"In the course of the forenoon, I suppose, captain. But you have time to get breakfast first."

"How am I to get it?"

"Well, I suppose you wouldn't like the fare provided here; but you can send out and have anything extra brought, if you are willing to pay for it. You can write your order, captain," said Dryant, drawing out his pad and pencil, and putting them in the hands of his prisoner.

Stuart wrote a short and simple bill of fare for his early meal, and Dryant dispatched it by a messenger to the nearest restaurant.

"And now, officer, I wish to send two notes—one to Mr. Samuel Walling, of the firm of Walling & Walling, Judiciary Buildings, Star Street, whom I know to be in town at present; and one to Mr. Peter Vansitart, who, I hope, may also be found at his place of business," said Stuart.

"Very well, captain. Write your notes, and I will see that they are promptly sent," replied Dryant.

"Do; for I shall ask these gentlemen to meet me in court to-day."

"All right, captain. Use that pad, and I'll find envelopes," said the obliging officer.

And the notes were written and dispatched.

The breakfast was soon brought, and arranged on a bench at the end of the corridor, in lack of a better table.

"Now, captain, I think we may start," said Dryant, as soon as Stuart had finished his meal.

"For the court room? Yes," replied Stuart, rising.

"Not exactly. We have orders first to take you somewhere else," replied the officer.

"Somewhere else?" demanded Cleve, in a fresh surprise.

"Now, captain, you will know soon enough. Come!"

Stuart, full of perplexity, followed the officer upstairs, through the main offices, and out upon the sidewalk, where a carriage stood waiting for them.

When Cleve Stuart found himself seated in the vehible, in company with Dryant and another officer, he once more inquired:

"Where are you taking me?"

"You will find out in a very few minutes, captain," replied Dryant.

The hackman had received his private orders and drove rapidly on, turning several street corners one after another, and finally drew up before the great gates of the hospital where Jennie Montgomery lay.

Dryant got out first, and requested his prisoner to alight. Stuart came down, closely followed by Officer Grey.

The three entered the hospital.

In the outer hall they were met by an attendant who seemed to expect the party, and who conducted them upstairs and along several passages to the confinement ward in which Jennie Montgomery happened to be the only patient.

Stuart asked no more questions, but waited for the *dénouement*. They walked between rows of little white beds until they came to that occupied by Jennie and her child.

Mrs. Gilbert, the nurse, was in attendance.

"How is your patient?" inquired Dryant, in a low voice.

"Doing nicely," said the nurse; and then she caught sight of young Stuart and stared open-mouthed at him. He seemed to her to be the unquestionable original of the miniature that the convalescent young mother was guarding with such jealous care.

"I see what you are going to do," she said. "You are going to confront this man with her; but it is no use; she won't own him; besides, she is asleep now and must not be disturbed."

"Stand here, captain, so that her eyes may light on you, as soon as she opens them," said Dryant, paying no attention to the nurse's words, but placing his man where he wished him to be posted, by the side of the head of the patient's bed.

Cleve Stuart really wished nothing better just now than to be confronted with the woman supposed to be his injured wife, and whom he had been accused of assaulting with intent to kill. Police officers might be deceived by a likeness between himself and the photograph of this woman's husband and assailant, but the wife never could be so misled.

Cleve Stuart had been standing at his post only a few minutes when Jennie calmly opened her eyes, saw the counterpart of her husband standing there, and startled by the likeness, stared for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Why, Kightly! Is that you? Why, you have shaved off your——"

Then she stopped abruptly and stared harder than ever.

"So this man is your husband, madam?" said Dryant, in a quiet tone.

"No, he is not. He is a perfect stranger. I never saw him in my life before, to my knowledge," replied Jennie, turning away her head.

"There! I told you so," commented the nurse. "She'll never give him away."

"Look again, Mrs. Montgomery. Is not this man your husband?" persisted Dryant.

"No, he is not. Do you suppose I could possibly be mistaken in such a matter?" impatiently demanded the young woman.

"And yet, when you first saw him here, being taken by surprise, you called him by your husband's name," objected Dryant.

"Suppose I did? What of that? I was but half awake, and startled by the likeness; for there is a very striking likeness; but likeness don't constitute identity. And if there is a great likeness there is also a great difference. My husband had much lighter——"

Then she stopped suddenly, finding that she had nearly been betrayed into giving some personal points of the gallant Kightly that might lead to his identification and arrest.

"Lighter—what, madam? Eyes, hair, complexion?" insinuatingly inquired Dryant.

"Excuse me, I would rather not tell you. And I think it is not fair for you to try to entrap a poor woman into saying things she does not wish to say, when her head is so weak, too, with all that she has gone through," Jennie complained, and again she turned her face away from her cross-questioners.

"And you finally declare that this man is not your husband?" reiterated Dryant.

"Yes, I do. And if you will bring me a Bible I will swear that he is not," said Jennie.

As nothing else but positive denial of all knowledge of the stranger could be got from her, the officers, much discomfited, took their prisoner away.

"I told you how it would be. I knew how it would be. But he is her husband, all the same. But what can you do, if she refuses to prosecute?" said Mrs. Gilbert, as she followed the party to the door. And then turning to the prisoner, she volunteered the following exhortation:

"And as for you, Capt. Montgomery, if you have any heart, or any soul, or any conscience, or any feeling, you would be touched and affected by your wife's mag-nanimosity!"—she was not quite sure that she had the whole of that very big word at her tongue's end, and so she

brought it out slowly—"a woman who is willing to risk her soul's salvation to shield you. I should think you would be down on your knees, with your forehead in the dust."

"And so I should be, ma'am, if I were the caitiff in question; but you see I am not," said Stuart, with a laugh, for the whole affair was beginning to look to him like a huge joke. He was so sure of being soon released.

Not so sure were the two policemen. They knew of other evidence, condemning evidence, against the prisoner. If the injured wife refused to identify him here, she might be compelled to testify in court.

He was sure to be committed for trial without bail.

These were their thoughts as they placed their prisoner again in the carriage, and took places, the one beside him and the other opposite him, on the cushions, and gave the order to the coachman to drive back to police headquarters.

An hour after this, Cleve Stuart, under the name of Kightly Montgomery, was taken into the police court and placed before the judge, charged with assault with intent to kill his wife, Jennie Montgomery.

CHAPTER XXIX

BEFORE THE JUDGE

"Capt. Kightly Montgomery," said Justice Sneede, taking up a document from the table before him, and referring to it. "You are herein charged with having, on the thirty-first of July, ultimo, on Quarry Street, in this city, made a felonious assault upon the person of your wife, Jane Montgomery, with intent to kill her and her unborn child. What have you to say to this charge?"

"In the first place, your honor, I have to say that I am not Capt. Kightly Montgomery, nor—with submission to the court—Capt. anybody else.

"In the second place, my wife's name is not Jane Montgomery, but Palma Hay Stuart.

"In the third, that I never assaulted my wife or any other person, either with or without intent to kill.

"In the fourth, that neither my wife nor myself was in New York City on the thirty-first, or any other day in July.

"In the fifth, that this is a case of mistaken identity.

"In the sixth and last, that I am momentarily expecting witnesses here, who will prove the truth of my statement," replied Cleve Stuart, and with a bow he resumed his seat.

"Roundsman Hawke!"

The night watchman who had first discovered the body of the wounded girl came up and testified to having, in the early morning hours, say about half-past two o'clock, passed up Quarry Street from the river, and stumbled over an obstacle which, on examining, he found to be the apparently dead body of a girl. There was no one near. He stooped and raised the body, and while he was examining it, a man came along who stopped and asked what was the matter, and stooped also to look at the girl, and said she was stone dead, and then hastened away to take the news to the morning paper for which he was reporter. And the witness then sprang his rattle and obtained assistance in removing the body to the hospital, for signs of life had shown themselves when she was lifted.

The next witness was the surgeon who first examined the wound. He testified that the blow was aimed at the heart, and must have pierced it but that the steel in the young woman's stays turned the point of the knife so that it only made a slanting flesh wound in the left breast, more painful than dangerous; and that the first appearance of death had been produced by the girl having fainted from the nervous shock.

The third witness was Mrs. Mary Marshall, widow and seamstress, living directly opposite to the scene of the assault.

She repeated the testimony she had given the day before at police headquarters, as to the hour, half-past two in the morning, when she arose from a sleepless and feverish bed, and went and sat at the window to get a breath of fresh air; as to the darkness and the loneliness of the street; the approach of two persons, a man and a woman, who were quarreling, the woman insisting on being acknowledged as the wife of the man, and the man denying her claim; in speaking to each other, the young woman called the man Kightly; he called her Jennie; as they reached the spot opposite the window at which witness sat, their altercation grew more earnest and angry; they both stopped, and wit-

ness saw the man's arm suddenly lifted, the blade of a knife gleam for an instant, and then was buried in the bosom of the girl, who fell to the ground; and then witness, who was ill and weak, "fainted dead away."

"Does the prisoner look like the man who stabbed the girl?" inquired the judge.

"Yes, your honor, very much like him, indeed, as to height, and size, and form. As to face, and features, and complexion, I couldn't say. It was too dark to make them out."

"Where are your witnesses, prisoner?"

"I do not see them in court, your honor. They have not, indeed, been regularly summoned, I think. I only wrote notes requesting them to meet me here," replied Stuart.

"Who are they?"

"Mr. Peter Vansitart, banker, and Mr. Samuel Walling, of the firm of Walling & Walling, attorneys-at-law."

"Let the clerk of the court make out subpœnas for these persons, and Officer Craig, see that they are served. The prisoner is remanded, and the case postponed until to-morrow at ten o'clock," said the judge.

Stuart turned sick at heart, not for himself, but for Palma, when he thought of another day of distressing suspense for her.

"Remove the prisoner," said the judge.

Two policemen approached to obey the order. Stuart thought he would send another telegram to Palma, to inform her that business still detained him in the city, and he hoped that she would never find out the nature of the business.

But just as he turned to follow his conductors a bustle was heard in the lower end of the court room, and old Peter Vansitart and stout Samuel Walling were seen pushing their way through the crowd toward the bench.

Walling was the first to reach the presence of the judge, though a little out of breath.

He bowed to the court, and said:

"May it please your honor, I am here as counsel for the accused, Mr. Cleve Stuart, whose position is clearly one of mistaken identity. Will it please your honor, in justice to my client, to let his case proceed?"

"Certainly, Mr. Walling. We were only waiting for you

and another," replied the judge. And he gave the necessary order.

Cleve Stuart was brought back.

Mr. Walling heartily shook hands with the prisoner, laughing, and exclaiming:

"Upon my word, this is a pretty comedy, Stuart! I was over my cup of coffee, this morning, and had not yet opened any of my letters, when my esteemed friend here, Mr. Peter Vansitart, came bustling in, and told me he wished to engage me immediately to defend our mutual young friend, Stuart, who was arrested by mistake on a charge of assault, with intent to kill his wife. Of course, I came away immediately."

"And you have arrived just in time to save me from another day's incarceration. If you had been one minute later——"

"You would have been sent back to the inferno. But, thanks to my invariable habit of opening my letters the first thing in the morning, I got your note, hurried with it to Walling, who had not looked at his. and here we are in time to serve you," put in old Peter Vansitart.

"No word of mine can thank you both enough," responded Stuart.

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" exclaimed the old man.

"Your honor, I move that Mr. Peter Vansitart be put upon the stand and examined as to the identity of the prisoner," said Mr. Walling.

"Peter Vansitart will take the stand," said the judge.

The old patroon came forward, took the oath, and testified:

"I have known the prisoner, Mr. Cleve Stuart, for about twelve months. Have known him intimately for the last six. Formed his acquaintance in Paris, last autumn. Knew him all the winter in the French capital. Came over in the *Leverie* with him, last March. Saw him every day from that time until the first of May last, when I learned that he had married, and had gone to spend his honeymoon somewhere up the Hudson. I swear that the accused man is Mr. Cleve Stuart, and no other. I have also brought my butler, Joseph Tompkins, a most respectable person, to testify to the identity of the prisoner as Mr. Cleve Stuart; for in a 'cloud of witnesses,' as well as 'in a multitude of coun-

selors,' there is safety," said the old gentleman. And he bowed to the judge, and sat down.

Then Joseph Tompkins was called to the stand and sworn.

He testified to having known the prisoner well, and having seen him every day at his master's house for about six weeks, as Mr. Cleve Stuart.

But Samuel Walling's testimony was the most conclusive of all.

Having taken the stand and the oath, he deposed that he had known Mr. Cleve Stuart ever since the latter was a lad of sixteen and up to the age of twenty-one, when young Stuart went to Europe; that he had recognized him at once, on his return a few months since; and that the prisoner was Cleve Stuart, and no one else.

Samuel Walling had but just stepped down, when a powerful ally unexpectedly appeared in the person of Jacob Lull, who came forward and expressed a wish to be sworn and examined in this case.

Jacob had come down that morning to make purchases for the house. He had performed his commission, and while waiting for the next train he had strayed into the police court as a mere matter of pastime.

Unseen by the prisoner, he had heard the whole charge; had, indeed, been on the point of coming forward to the rescue, when the appearance of two such magnates as Mr. Peter Vansitart and Mr. Samuel Walling deterred him for a while.

Now, however, when these two great men had said all they had to say, "Jake" saw his opportunity of clinching, so to speak, the case in favor of the prisoner.

His evidence was short and simple, and to the point, and may be condensed as follows:

"Yes, I know the prisoner, and have known him for about four months. He is Mr. Cleve Stuart, and has lived at our house, the Pine Mountain House, ever since the first of last May. On the thirty-first of July, when the assault on Jennie Montgomery is said to have taken place, he was at the Pine Mountain House all day and all night, as he was all the days and all the nights for three months before that, and as he has been all the days and all the nights one month since that until yesterday morning, when he left the

house for the first time since the first of May, and came down to the city on business. And that is Mr. Cleve Stuart, and this is all I have got to say," concluded this witness, as he bowed to the court and sat down.

"I move that the case be dismissed," said Samuel Walling.

"Mr. Stuart, you are discharged," said the judge.

Then Cleve Stuart bowed to the judge and turned to his friends.

Samuel Walling burst out laughing.

"Never heard of such a case in the whole course of my life, Stuart! Have met such in my law books, but never met one in life! The idea of you being locked up all night on such a charge, just from your resemblance to a photograph! Come! Let us adjourn to the Grand Central, and crack a bottle of Clicquot in honor of the finest police in the world!" he exclaimed, as the whole party passed out of the court room.

"But I wished to catch the next train for Lull's, thank you," replied Stuart.

"You can't do it! Train leaves at two, and it is now five minutes to that! The next train after it, leaves at three-forty. You have plenty of time to lunch leisurely with us. Come!"

Stuart yielded, and the four men—for young Lull, in regard to his services, had been included in the invitation—boarded a stage and rode off to the chosen restaurant, where they had a merry lunch, and lingered over it until it was time for two of them to take the train.

Then they parted company, Mr. Vansitart and Mr. Walling going downtown, and Cleve Stuart and Jake Lull going across to the depot where they caught the three-forty for Lull's.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN THE MORNING CAME

MEANWHILE, Palma had passed a night of terrible anxiety, which no arguments of Mrs. Pole could soothe.

The good woman sat in an easy-chair by her bedside,

through all the dark hours, for the light of the kerosene lamp was turned low to favor and induce sleep, if possible.

When Palma was quiet, Mrs. Pole dozed, but woke up instantly at any movement of her charge.

Palma, like many anxious sufferers much wiser than herself, harped upon one string.

"If he had not telegraphed to me that he had missed the seven and would come by the nine-thirty, I should not be so anxious! I should simply think he had stayed over for the opera, as I begged him to do, if he should feel inclined; but instead of that, he telegraphed that he was coming! And he has not come! And oh! I know something has happened to him," she moaned.

"Nothing has happened, but he has missed the train again. He could not telegraph again, because the office was shut at this end," Mrs. Pole replied.

"Oh, Poley! I wish it was day!"

"Say your prayers, child, and try to go to sleep," Mrs. Pole answered, being more than half asleep herself.

At length, when the light of the early dawn was peeping through the slats of the shutters, Palma, overcome with mental and bodily fatigue, fell into a profound slumber, which, within an hour, however, was broken by a loud rapping at the chamber door.

It first roused Mrs. Pole, who, starting from her sleep and from her chair simultaneously, demanded sharply, for her nerves were all unstrung for want of rest:

"What's the matter now? Has bedlam broke loose?"

"A telegram, marm," answered the voice of old Mr. Lull.

"A telegram!" exclaimed the woman, flying to the door and opening it.

"A telegram!" cried Palma, starting out of her sleep, and sitting up in bed.

"Yes, marm. It should have come last night, only the office was closed, you see. I drove our Jake down to the station to take the airliest train to the city this morning, and I got the telegram and brought it back with me, else you wouldn't have got it for two hours yet," Mr. Lull explained, after he had passed the envelope to Mrs. Pole, who hurried with it to Palma, who tore it open, read it and exclaimed:

"Oh, Poley, it is all right! He was detained by business.

He did dispatch this message to me last night, but, you see, it came after the office was closed. He will be here in the course of the day."

"I told you so," grunted Mrs. Pole.

"And I will never be such a fool as to make myself so unhappy about nothing again as long as I live."

"I hope not, but I don't know. I ain't so sure about that," grumbled the good woman, for her nerves and temper had been sorely tried by the anxious little wife.

Early as it was, Palma did not go to sleep again, but arose and dressed herself, took a book and went out on the piazza.

Mrs. Pole made the beds, set the room in order and went out to gossip with her friends the waitresses, meanwhile helping and not hindering them at their morning work.

Ladies soon came trooping downstairs, and out upon the piazza to enjoy the fresh air and get an appetite for breakfast.

When the morning meal was over, they all repaired to their rooms, except Palma, who brought out her little work-basket, piled up with Mrs. Shepherd's laces, which she had undertaken to mend artistically, with the pattern stitches, so that the fractures could never be discovered.

The dainty, little, old lady soon joined her there with some knitting, and they worked and chatted as on the day before, and watching the stage go and come at its regular times.

And so the hours of the forenoon passed away until the lunch bell rang.

By this time Palma had finished mending the laces, and had folded them neatly.

She now arose and gave them to Mrs. Shepherd, who was warm in the expression of her gratitude and admiration.

They went into the house together.

After lunch Palma retired to her bedroom and lay down, for she was beginning to feel the effects of her sleepless night. No sooner now had her head touched the pillow than she sank into a profound slumber.

Mrs. Pole closed the shutters and darkened the chamber, and then went off to her own room to take the nap that she also needed.

The warm, still hours of the afternoon slipped away, and

Palma slept on until the sun was low—slept on until she was awakened by a ringing footstep in the room, and the voice of her husband calling:

"Palma!"

"Oh, Cleve!"

She started up with the cry, and came forward and met him as if—he had just returned safe from an Arctic expedition.

"Were you so anxious, dear?" he inquired, looking wistfully into her pale, tired face, which even sleep had not quite restored.

"Oh, Cleve, yes! It was the first time, you know, and I feared something had happened to you. I will never be so foolish again."

"Then you did not get my second telegram?"

"Not last night; the office was closed. Not until this morning. But, Cleve, you look very worn and worried. What has been the matter, dear? What was the nature of the business that kept you away?" she inquired, taking his face between her little hands and gazing into it.

"Nothing but what is now happily over, dear. I will tell you some time. Now we must get ready for dinner," he replied, heartily, hoping that no mention of his arraignment at the police court upon the false charge might have found its way into the evening papers.

The morning papers had mentioned the arrest of Capt. Kightly Montgomery, but had not mentioned the name of Cleve Stuart; but the evening papers would, of course, use the good joke of a quiet gentleman like Cleve Stuart being brought before the police court on the charge of assault with intent to kill, which had been made by another man—probably a street ruffian.

And it was so, for when Stuart, having finished his toilet before Palma completed hers, went out upon the piazza, he was greeted by shouts of laughter from his fellow boarders, all with papers in their hands, and all ready to chaff him on his adventure.

He took it good-humoredly enough, and said something about the experience being worth the inconvenience.

In the midst of the merriment Palma came out, looking very pretty in her simple crimson cashmere dress, with the

narrow ruffles at the throat and wrist, and her curly black hair, with its one white rose behind the ear.

"What is it, Cleve?" she inquired, looking from one to the other, seeing that her husband was the subject of the conversation, but feeling no uneasiness because everyone looked so good-humored.

"My dear, these gentlemen are laughing at my expense, at the business upon which I was detained in the city—simply that I was mistaken for a ruffian who had nearly murdered his wife, and I had to stay until I could find some friends to identify me as Cleve Stuart; a quiet house dog, who never wanted to murder anybody," merrily replied the young man; but the horrified look on the face of his wife stopped his laughter.

"Oh, Cleve! And where did you stay?" she inquired.

"In a—in a——" he could not tell her in a prison, and he did not wish to tell her a fib, so he added: "In a public house."

"Public house? Oh! that is the old-fashioned name for a hotel. How funny! Mr. Barrn used to call hotels public houses."

"And now let us say no more about it. There's the dinner bell. Come," he said, drawing her arm through his own, and leading her in.

His companions followed them; but understanding that no more "chaffing" was to be tolerated in the presence of the young wife, the subject of Stuart's adventure with the policeman was dropped.

The month wore on towards its close.

Nothing had been heard of the thieves who had stolen the diamonds from Stuart's traveling trunk. Rewards had been offered for the return of the jewels without effect.

At length Stuart gave them up for lost.

In the last week of their stay at Lull's, Cleve went once more down to the city for a few hours only. His business was to secure cheap, plainly furnished apartments for himself and wife, with Mrs. Pole for housekeeper and general servant.

Such a suit he found in a French flat in the northwestern section of the city. He secured them at once, at a moderate rent, and returned to Lull's to make preparations for removal.

He had resolved that, when he should be settled in the city, he would go to work—at any work that he could get. He would be clerk, tutor, bookkeeper, or amanuensis, if he could succeed in procuring an engagement in either capacity—if not, he would be a coachman, butler, or gardener—if he could get a situation as either. He would do any honest work, however hard, take any decent place, however humble, to earn the comforts of life for his delicate young wife.

Yet Palma was not so fragile as she had been. Her health and strength seemed to be entirely restored; her eyes glowed, her cheeks bloomed.

When the last day at Lull's came, she was able to be active in helping Mrs. Pole to pack the trunks.

And when that task was completed she went out, leaning on Stuart's arm, to take her last ramble through the woods that surrounded the house. There were rustic seats here and there, where she sat down to rest.

At sunset they returned to the house to dinner.

That night the young pair—in view of their early departure on the ensuing morning—went early to bed.

Palma, having exerted herself more than usual, felt very tired and sleepy, and almost immediately dropped into a deep and healthful slumber.

But Cleve, disturbed by his great anxiety for the future, lay wide awake. The diamond robbery troubled him. If his diamonds had not been stolen he might have managed to live comfortably through the winter, and applied himself to the study of law; but now he must work at whatever his hands could find to do, however humble it might be. He was satisfied that Palma knew nothing of his anxieties. She had grown up in the faith that he was a man of vast wealth, the owner of a rich cotton plantation and many slaves. She knew the slaves were free, but she did not know that the war had transformed the plantation into a desert, with heaps of charred stones and cinders where the elegant mansion house, the cotton mill, offices and cabins had stood, and that it would take as many thousand dollars as the land was worth to restore it, and rebuild the houses, and that Cleve Stuart did not possess as many tens. So Palma slept tranquilly, free from all cares of the world, from which he would, indeed, have toiled hard to save her;

while he lay wide awake, hearing every hour that struck on the old hall clock outside his room.

The clock had just tolled three, when he was startled by a most unusual event, occurring in the dead of night. It was the faint gleam of a wax taper moving about the dense darkness of the apartment. At first he could see nothing but the slowly passing taper, that seemed to be moving of itself; but when he raised himself on his elbow, and gazed more intently, he saw the bony fingers that held the taper. It was advancing into the room, and as it came nearer he could perceive the dim outlines of a tall, gaunt human form, clothed in a long, white gown, with some white drapery dropping around the head.

CHAPTER XXXI

A DISCOVERY

His first impulse was to call aloud to ask:

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" But his second thought led him to sink back on his pillow, lie still, and watch; for he perceived that the intruder was a woman.

She came nearer still, and raised the taper up until its full, though faint, light fell upon her face.

And now Cleve Stuart recognized her.

It was Mary Pole. He saw that she was fast asleep; but her eyes were wide open and staring fixedly, yet seeing nothing; they were as the eyes of the dead.

"A somnambulist!" murmured Stuart to himself, as he watched her in some little awe, for he had never seen this phenomenon before.

Remembering the danger of suddenly awakening such a sleeper he lay very still, scarcely breathing, but following her with his eyes.

She came up to the side of the bed, set the taper on a little stand that stood near the head of the bed, then took up Cleve's trousers, felt in his pockets, and drew forth a bunch of keys.

Then she took up the taper again and moved down the

room to where the large Saratoga trunk stood, locked and strapped, and ready for the van in the morning.

She drew a flat-bottomed chair forward, placed the taper and the keys upon it, and then knelt down before the trunk, which she began to unstrap.

Cleve Stuart, cautiously raising himself on his elbow, watched her as well as he could from that distance.

When she had laid off the last strap she reached for the keys, unlocked the trunk and raised the lid.

Stuart nearly tumbled out of bed in his efforts to lean far enough to see what she was doing. He would have gotten out and crossed the floor in his bare feet, but that he knew the boards had a habit of creaking under footfalls, loud enough to waken any sleeper; so he only leaned as far out as he could, and watched her as closely as possible. What was she after?

Oh! He saw now! It was the pretty little box of embroidered pocket handkerchiefs that he had brought from the city for Palma.

She took out the box from the top of the tray, laid it on the chair, and then locked the trunk, and finally took up the taper in one hand, the little box and the keys in the other, and came back toward the bed.

Cleve Stuart sank silently back on his pillow, and watched her with wide-open eyes.

She set the box and the taper on the little stand, took up his trousers again, found the pocket, replaced the keys, and hung the garment over the back of the chair. Finally she took up the box and the taper and moved off with them.

Stuart had to turn all around with his face to the head of the bed to watch her now, for she was going toward the mantelpiece that was standing parallel to the headboard, though several feet further toward the front.

Here she set the taper on the end of the mantelpiece, and came around to the side.

It was an old-fashioned wooden frame, very large and clumsy. She stood on the side nearest the bed, fumbling at the woodwork. Presently a small door opened under her touch. She pushed the box in and closed the door, which shut with a snap.

Then she stood up and stared around the room, evidently seeing nothing, yet seeming to observe if all were right.

Then she went and took the flat-bottomed chair from before the trunk and set it back in its place.

Finally she came and took the taper from the mantelpiece, crossed the room, opened the door and went out, locking the door after her and withdrawing the key.

Cleve Stuart lay as if stunned for a minute after the somnambulist had disappeared. He listened for her retreating footsteps, but could not hear a sound. She had gone away as noiselessly as she had come. She moved in her sleep as silently as a shadow.

How had she managed to enter the room, he wondered. He himself had locked the door, and left the key in its place before he went to bed. How, then, could she have got in?

He determined to investigate the matter at once, even at the risk of disturbing the sleeping Palma; though he hoped to be able to move about without waking her. He arose cautiously, felt about in the dark for his dressing gown, found it and slipped it on, felt for the box of matches on the stand, found it, and struck a match and lighted the wax candle that stood near. Then he glanced at Palma, saw that she was still sleeping soundly, with her back to the light, and her face to the wall, and with a sigh of relief that he had not roused her, he crossed the room and looked at the lock of the door. The light gleamed upon some steel object half buried in the white wool of the door mat inside.

It was the key of the room.

He stooped and picked it up, and then he understood how the somnambulist had come in. She had pushed the proper key out of its hole so that it fell on the soft mat noiselessly in the inside. Then she had put in the chambermaid's pass key to which she had access, and so had unlocked the door and entered the room, and she had locked the door after her by the same means when she went out.

Stuart replaced the key in its hole, and then took the wax candle and went over to the mantelpiece to investigate the secrets of that end cupboard. It was in the elaborately wrought framework of the old-fashioned fabric, and might have escaped attention from anyone who did not know of its existence. Yet it was not hard to open. The timbers had shrunk, and the spring was easily found, being partly exposed.

Cleve pressed it, and the little door flew open.

He held the candle close, and saw first the box of handkerchiefs. He took that out and laid it on the mantelpiece, and then held the candle in the cupboard to see what else might be there.

A spectacle case!

He took it out, opened it, and found the spectacles whose loss Mrs. Pole had been bewailing for a month past.

He put his hand in, and touched—another case! A wild hope that he scarcely dared to receive darted into his mind. He drew it out, tore it open, and there, flashing in his eyes, dazzling his sight, were his diamonds!

He could scarcely repress a cry of delight and amazement. He gazed at them, feasted his eyes on them, for to him they meant comfortable provision for his delicate wife for the winter at least.

He removed everything from the little cupboard. There was nothing besides the articles already mentioned. He laid the spectacles on the mantelpiece, but took his keys, opened the trunk and locked his diamonds up securely, and hid the keys under a corner of the mattress, lest the sleepwalker should take another fancy to make a nocturnal visit to the room.

Finally, he blew out the candle, threw off his dressing-gown, and slipped into bed, resolving for good reasons not to say anything to Palma or to Mrs. Pole of the night's event.

But there was no more sleep for him. He heard the clock strike every hour. When it struck five he arose and opened a side window that would not let the light in directly on Palma's face, and awaken her. Then he dressed and walked out on the piazza.

The sun had just risen, and was shining through the trees on the higher mountain's top.

The house was actively astir.

He walked up and down for about three-quarters of an hour, when Palma came out dressed in her traveling suit, except her hat and gloves, and joined them.

"You slept well last night, dear?"

"I never awoke from the time I lay down until I rose this morning."

"Happy sleeper! I have good news for you, dear."

"What is it?"

"I have found the diamonds!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, catching her breath. "Where?"

"In a little secret closet."

"A little secret closet! What closet?"

"In the end of the mantelpiece. I will show it to you when we go in; not now. There is the breakfast bell. Come, we will go in. But stop. Where is Mrs. Pole?"

"Why, there she is now. Just going into our room."

"Hasn't she been in there before this morning?" inquired Stuart, keeping his eyes on the motions of the woman as she entered the chamber.

"Oh, yes, when I rang for her she came to wait on me."

"Has she been alone in the room this morning? Did you leave her there when you came out?"

"No; she has not been alone an instant until now. Before I left the room I sent her to hang my wrapper on the line, to air it before packing it away in the bag. And she has just brought it in."

Cleve Stuart saw that. He had not taken his eyes off the woman since her entrance into the room.

"But, dear," said Palma, reverting to the previous question, "I am so delighted that you have found the diamonds! How could they have come in that secret closet? I never even knew that there was a closet there. Did you?"

"Not until very recently."

"But how could the diamonds have got there?"

"Some one must have stowed them away for safe keeping. It was a very secure hiding place."

"Did you do it, Cleve?"

"I have not the slightest remembrance of ever having done so," he replied, evasively.

"Yet, of course, it must have been you. Why didn't you think of the closet before? And how came you to think of it this morning?"

"I was making a final search before giving up the room," again replied Cleve, not untruthfully, but evasively.

"It is well you thought of that. Oh, suppose we had gone away, and left the treasure to remain hidden, perhaps, a hundred years, until the old house should be pulled down and no owner found for the jewels!"

"Well, but, dear, it has not happened so. Now go in to breakfast. I will join you in a few minutes," he said.

"But why not come with me, Cleve? You were up earlier than I, and must be hungry," she inquired, lingering.

"Because I am waiting—— But go in, dear. I will follow soon."

Palma left him with a smile, and joined the group of ladies who were going toward the breakfast room.

Stuart was waiting—waiting for Mrs. Pole to leave the bedroom. And, meantime, he had not once taken his eyes off her.

He now seated himself on the bench behind one of the window shutters that was folded back against him, and from which covert he could watch, unseen, every motion of the woman within the room.

He did not suspect Mrs. Pole of having stolen his diamonds. He believed her to be thoroughly honest. But he wanted to support his faith by "confirmation strong as proof from the Holy Writ." So he watched her closely, feeling somewhat humiliated at playing the part of a spy, yet justified by the end in view.

Mrs. Pole moved about the room, picking up and folding garments, gathering combs, brushes, slippers and other things that had been in use since the trunk was closed, and packing them in a carpetbag. She never went near the secret closet, nor even reached her hand to the mantelshelf, where she might have found her missing spectacles.

Finally, having closed and clasped the bag, she left the room and locked the door after her.

Cleve Stuart felt much relieved. Yes; he had believed her to be trustworthy, or, rather, he believed that he believed this; but he was inwardly rejoiced to have his confidence justified.

He came into the hall as Mrs. Pole was withdrawing the key from the lock.

"Good morning, sir!" she said, with a smile. "I thought you was at breakfast, and was just a-going to send this key to you by one of the waitresses; but will you take it now?"

Cleve took it with a word of thanks, and went on to the breakfast room, where he dropped into the vacant chair that that had been left for him beside his wife.

Nearly everyone else had finished and left the table.

"I have been thinking, dear, that you might prefer going to the city by the steamboat," he said, as he took his seat.

"Oh, I should! So much! But I thought there was no boat to stop here in the morning!" she exclaimed.

"There is one touches Lull's Landing at three in the afternoon; if you would not mind getting into the city rather late we can go by that."

"I should be delighted; for though there is no moon, the starlight is so brilliant at this season that the nights must be splendid on the river."

"So be it, then. We need not leave here until after lunch."

They finished breakfast, and went on the piazza, where some of their fellow boarders, who were going away that morning, stood in their traveling suits waiting for the stage to come around from the stables.

"Hadn't you better put on your hat, Mrs. Stuart? The coach will be around presently?"

"We have decided to remain for the boat," Palma explained.

"Oh!" exclaimed the other lady, and the conversation dropped.

The hotel stage, drawn by four horses, and driven by Jake Lull, came rolling around to the front of the house. The passengers that were going bade a hasty good-by to those who were staying, and took their seats and drove away.

Cleve and Palma returned to their room. Palma rang for Mrs. Pole, who, having finished her breakfast, soon made her appearance.

Stuart explained to the good woman that they were not to leave the house until half-past one o'clock, and that they should take the three o'clock boat from Lull's Landing.

"Very well, sir," she replied.

"And now I have got a surprise for you," said the young man, reaching for the spectacle case on the high mantelshelf. "Here is the lost treasure that you have been so long lamenting."

"Lord sakes!" exclaimed the woman. "Where did you find 'em, sir?"

"Guess," he said.

"I couldn't to save my life, for I have searched every inch of every place and could not get 'em!"

"I found them right here. Come and see," said Stuart, leading the way to the secret closet at the end of the mantelpiece, and pressing the spring until the little door flew open.

"The Lord bless us and save us! What a hole! It makes one think of ghosts and old castles and subterrambulous passages and things!" exclaimed the woman, peering into the closet with genuine amazement and curiosity.

"Did you know of this closet?"

"Never dreamed of it, sir! And how did my specs get there? I begin to believe in sperrits!"

"Well, you have something to think about now," said Stuart.

CHAPTER XXXII

A MEETING

JUDY, carrying on her arm the little basket of children's stockings that Mrs. Moseley had given her to darn, left the colonel's quarters, feeling very happy in having something to do for the "good lady" who had been so kind to her and to Ran.

She sang as she tripped along the walk, between flower beds, on her way to the hospital. The wild birds were singing, too, for the day was very fine, the sky very blue, and the air very fresh and full of perfume.

What the birds sang, bird linguists only could translate, all others could only understand a

"'Joy' in the 'songs,' but not the 'songs.'"

But what the Irish maiden sang was a refrain from one of the old melodies of her favorite national poet, Tom Moore. She sang freely, rapturously, because she thought there was no one but the birds in hearing:

"Oh! there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream!
No! there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young——'

"Ged Lorrd save us, Mike! Is it yourself, sure? Or is it a ghost? Or have ye dhropped down from the clouds foreninst me the day?" suddenly exclaimed Judy to the brother whom she had come upon in her walk.

"Sure, and it's a pretty chase as ye've led me, through fifty miles av a howling wiltherniss! What the divil ivir possessed ye to start on sich a wild goose chase afther a dhrame?" demanded Mike, more in merriment than in displeasure.

"Sure, thin, me dhrame kim thrue, and jestified itself," retorted Judy.

"It's ravin' mad ye was to set off yer lone to walk through thim woods. It's jest wonderful the wolves didn't ate ye, or the Injuns skelp ye, or the ruffins murther ye."

"I had dear Tip with me. He wouldn't let anything harrum me."

"Two days and a night on the thramp! You, a young gurrul! Two days and a night on the thramp!"

"I slept in a big, beautiful hollow tree, with Tip slaping at the fut av it and keeping one eye open on guard."

"Och! bad cess till it all, it's glad I'll be whin yer safe married to Misther Hay, and aff the hands av meself!"

"Aff the hands av ye! Hear till him! Whin I've been mither and feyther to ye ivir since we rin away thegether and sit up housekaping, let alone being your own twin swishter."

"And so ye hev, Judy. And I'd brek the jaw av the man as would say ye hadn't. And how is the bhoy himself?"

"Maning Ran?"

"Av coorse! maning Ran."

"Oh, thin, he's out av danger, and much better, the saints be praised. He's aslape now. Or lasteways he was aslape whin I lift him an hour ago to get me dinner."

"Sure, and he must be one av the sivin slapers. He was aslape whin I kem this morning and axed to see him."

"And the more he slapes, the betther for him—— But whin did you say you kem, Mike—this morning?"

"Yes."

"And what med ye come, Mike, ava?"

"What med me come? Hear till her! Wouldn't I come to look afther ye, Judy?"

"So ye found the writing, did ye, Mike?"

"Yis! but not until the nixt morning. Sure I was late getting home that same night, and I thought ye had got tired wid waiting on me, and had turned in and gone to slape; for, d'ye see, the blanket was hanging down forninst yer bed. So not to disturb ye, I turned in meself as quiet as I could, and nivir a suspicion ye had run away till the nixt morning when I found the writing, stuck up agin the wall! Och! then didn't I raise a hullabaloo! Sure if I had found it the night before, I should have been twelve hours suner on the trail av ye, and twinty-four hours suner to find ye?"

"I don't see how that can be, Mike."

"Ye don't, don't ye? Well, then, I'll tell ye. First, by not finding the writing at tay time, whin I ought to hev been home, I lost twilve hours at Grizzly. And thin, be raiching Longman's afther tattoo had baten at the fort, I lost twilve more hours there. And twilve and twilve mek twinty-four, or ilse the hooly broothers av St. Joseph's tached me me 'rithmetic wrong!"

"And did you come alone, Mike?"

"Divil a step. It's only advanturous hayroines, like Judy Man, that thramps through the howling wildtherniss her lone."

"Who come wid ye, Mike?"

"Misther Andrew Quin, sure, and his dog, Nep."

"Uncle Dandy! Oh, what a good old fellow he is!"

"Yis, and his dog! Oh, I say, Judy, betwane your dog, Tip, and Dandy's dog, Nep, this New Nighted States fort has a consayderable rayinforcemint!"

"Thrue for ye, Mike, me darlint! And naded it is!" answered Judy, solemnly, not seeing the least of a joke. "And it's naded they are," she repeated, "for they talk of a rising among the Injuns, which, by the same token, the colonel himself has gone to Vigil, to-day, to see about the diffinces. And now, here we be at the hospital, and I'll jest go me ways inside, and see if me poor Ran is awake and if the docther will lave ye see him."

Mike threw himself down on a bench outside the door.

Judy passed on and went upstairs to the ward where Ran lay.

Old Peter was sitting in his arm-chair outside the ward

door, but rose to his feet, and opened it for the young girl to pass in.

Dr. Hill was standing beside the bed.

"And how is he by this time, docther, dear?" inquired Judy, going up to his side.

"Bright as a new sixpence. Almost able to handle a musket, in case of the expected attack by the Piutes," replied the surgeon, making way for the young girl.

"And what do ye say av yersilf, Ran, darlint?" she inquired.

"I am getting well, sweet Judy, and all the faster for seeing you," he answered, fondly.

"That's me darlint bhoy! And now, docther, dear," she said, turning to the surgeon, who was leaving the room, "will he be able for the sight av a good frind as hev come all the way from Grizzly to see him?"

"You mean your brother, Mike?"

"Yis, plaise, sirr."

"Oh, yes! he may see him. I will send him up."

"Thank ye, docther," said Judy.

The surgeon left the room, and Judy began to prepare her patient for his visitor; but found her work forestalled when Ran raised his eyes, and said:

"So Mike has come to see me, has he? Dear, faithful Mike?"

"Och, sure, the ears av ye are sharp enough, anyhow! And the hurt hasn't hurt thim!" replied Judy, with a laugh.

"But Mike has come, hasn't he?" inquired Ran.

"Oh, ay! Mike has come. He'll be here to see ye prisintly."

Judy had scarcely spoken, before Mike entered the room, admitted by old Peter.

He came straight up to the bed.

Ran held out his hand in welcome.

Judy withdrew a little to let the visitor approach.

"Och, Ran, me jewel, it's divilish sorry I am to see ye in sich a plight," began Mike.

"Stow that, my boy! I am ever so much better! And ever so glad to see you!" exclaimed Ran, pressing the hand of his friend.

"See that now! The bowld bhoy that he is! Making so

light o' the wounds and bruises that did for his mate intirely!" exclaimed Mike.

"Did for his mate intirely! Whativir do ye mane, Mike?" inquired Judy.

"He alludes to the fate of poor Delamere, Judy. Don't be afraid of me. I expected it, dear. I knew when I learned that I had been picked up for dead, and my poor traveling companion was not to be found, that he was dead, indeed. Both of us were struck down by the deadly Piutes, who are said to be on the warpath. You need not mind speaking before me. I probably know or guess as much as you can tell me," said Ran, calmly.

"But I—I didn't know a thing about it. Is Gintleman Geff dead?" inquired Judy, aghast.

"Yis, he is, poor fellow," answered Mike.

"Oh, the poor man! And many and many is the shirts I've done up for him! And he that particular wid his linen! And to come to sich an ind in the prime av his life! Och, hone! 'All is vanity and vexation of the spirit!' But how did you know it, Ran, and me and the good docther guarding av ye agin all sorts of shocks?"

"I guessed it, Judy. I guessed the same agency that wounded me killed him. You see, dear, those redskins steal on us under the shadow of the darkness of night, invisible and noiseless, and pick us off. Their aim is sure, and in most instances, certain and instantaneous death. They must have drawn simultaneously on each of us. They must have stricken us down in the same instant—Delamere to death, myself to something very near it," Ran explained.

"And you guessed all this?" inquired Judy.

"Yes; or rather I deduced it from precedents."

"You did—what?"

"I thought it must be so from what had gone before," said Ran, with a gentle smile.

"Oh!" exclaimed Judy, perfectly satisfied. Then turning to Mike, she inquired:

"But you! How did you find out what had come to poor Gintlemen Geff? Ah, was he that particular about his collars and cuffs and handkerchiefs? How did you find out, Mike? Why don't you answer me?"

"By finding of his dead body in the woods as I came along," gruffly replied Mike.

Judy recoiled, and shuddered and moaned under her breath:

"Oh-h-h-h!"

"You found that?" said Ran, staring in horror.

"To the divil wid ye, Mike, to hev no betther sinse than to say that same in the prisence av a wounded man!" indignantly exclaimed Judy.

"Sure, now, wasn't it yer own silf that axed me?" complained Mike, with the air of injured innocence.

"Dont be afraid for me, Judy. I am not so weak, dear, that I cannot bear to hear the truth. It is dreadful, dear. But no more dreadful and no more hurtful for me to hear than for you, or even for Mike," said Ran, so calmly that his voice dispelled all their fears.

"Sure, sick and wounded, and lying on the flat av yer back as ye be, ye're worth the two av us put together," said Mike.

"Not at all. But now, then, tell me all about it, Mike. I can bear to hear quite as well as you can bear to speak. I have not a bit of fever, old fellow. If I had, the surgeon would never have allowed you to come to me. So now go on."

Thus encouraged, Mike began, and told the whole history of his journey through the wilderness, the principal incident of which was the finding of the nude and mutilated dead body in the woods, with nothing to connect it with the identity of Gentleman Geff, except such general features as height, size, color of hair and beard, and surrounding circumstances.

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Will he have Christian burial?" at last inquired Ran.

"The skeleton will. There's nothing ilse lift forbye the yallor hair and beard. As soon as the colonel comes home mesilf will make a 'port till him. And sure he'll sind a squad to bring the remains—what's lift av thim—to the fort to have Christian burial in the cimitiry," said Mike.

"Poor Delamere! Poor fellow! If he had not so kindly volunteered to see me safe to San Francisco he would not have met with this fate!" groaned Ran, more deeply affected than his companions had expected him to be.

Mike, with a praiseworthy intention to remedy the evil done by changing the subject, observed:

"Ye haven't axed me yit how I kem to be crossing the wilderness when I kem upon the—the—the remains—what there was av thim."

"Oh, I did not need to be told that you followed Judy, even as Judy had followed me," said Ran, with a weary sigh.

"Och, thin, it's good at guessing ye are!" exclaimed Mike, somewhat relieved.

"Oh! poor Delamere! Poor fellow! If it had not been for his kindness to me he might have been alive now!" groaned Ran, beginning to turn restlessly in his bed.

"Oh, come now, I say! No more av that, if ye plaise. Sure, it was all written down in the book av fate, and it had to be accomplished. Thrue for ye, it had!" Mike expostulated.

"If it had not been for his kindness to me!" If it had not been for his kindness to me!" groaned Ran, tossing from side to side.

All these voices, and even these motions, reached the ears of the old veteran who was on guard at the door.

He got up with the help of his crutch, hobbled into the room and up to the bedside, and unceremoniously took Mike by his left ear and turned him around, saying:

"Ye hev throwed the patient into a fayver, so ye hev. And now ye'll lave this immadiately, or ye'll go into the guardhouse for disortherly condict. D'ye hear me?"

"What in the divil——" began Mike, freeing himself with a violent wrench.

But Judy interfered.

"Ye'll go quiet, Mike darlint. Don't mind the ould man. He manes well. And he's waited on Ran that faithful! But he's a little doty. So don't mind him, but go quiet; for, oh, see! I'm afeard we have riz Ran's faver!" she pleaded.

"All right, Judy. I'll go if you tell me. And I'll always be found till further notice at Samson Longman's lodge. Hands off! ye ould Aygyptian mummy!" exclaimed Mike, speaking submissively to his sister and defiantly to the old soldier.

"Lave him alone, Misther Pather, plaise, sirr. Sure he's only a silly, heady lad. But he'll go quiet as a lamb if ye'll lave him alone."

The veteran, smoothed down by Judy, growled out inar-

ticulate observations, but ended by hobbling out of the room, followed by the indignant Mike.

"There is no need for you, or for anyone, to go with me through the woods, Delamere. Thank you all the same, old fellow, for you are very kind; but, really, there is no need. I do not shrink from traveling through the wilderness alone. Not at all."

These words came, in interrupted murmurs, from the lips of the wounded man.

Judy bent over him, and listened in anxiety.

"Oh! you are really tired of Grizzly! You are really thinking of leaving! You really wish to go to 'Frisco! All right, then; I shall be more than glad of your good company," murmured the patient, talking to an imaginary companion.

"Oh, he is out of his head! He is wanthering!" cried Judy, quite beside herself with remorse and anxiety, "for if it had not been for me and Mike talking to him of such horrid things, he would not have been hev into this faver again!" she added.

Then she hurried to the door, crying:

"Oh, Misther Pather! Misther Pather! for the luve av Hivven, and all the saints! go and call the docther. Sure it's out of av his head he is, and wanthering in his mind with the faver that's rising on him! Oh, make haste and go, Misther Pather!"

"Sure, and I knew how it would be, wid both av yez talking to him like loonies about murthers, and bones, and skulls, and skillitins, enough to rise any man's hair off his head, less it was an owld vitirin like mesilf!" growled old Peter, as he slowly rose to his feet and hobbled off after the surgeon.

When Dr. Hill came in, and examined the man, he found him in a high fever, with some delirium.

He promptly sent away the weeping Judy and her self-reproaching brother, who had given to the excitable patient too graphic a picture of the ghastly discovery of the murder in the forest.

Judy, with her workbasket on her arm, went back weeping to her patroness, Mrs. Moseley.

Mike waited on the outside of the house for an oppor-

tunity of paying his respects to the colonel's wife, and thanking her for the great kindness shown his sister.

Mrs. Moseley comforted Judy, and told her that these relapses were not uncommon, and that she must not expect a badly wounded man to get well all one way; but this fever would probably be ephemeral and soon yield to treatment.

Then Judy gradually ceased to weep, and then spoke of the arrival of her brother, who wished to "pay his duty" to their benefactress.

Mrs. Moseley told her to bring him in.

And Judy went out and returned, followed by Mike, who seemed to be taken with a sudden fit of bashfulness, for he came in blushing, bowing, holding his hat in his hand and shifting it from right to left and back again.

Mike was very grateful, and he meant to be most respectful, most deferential; but, alack! when the colonel's wife had greeted him kindly, said she was glad to see him, and hoped he was well, and that she and his good little sister were best friends already, all that poor Mike found to say was that he was very thankful for her "shivility" to his "swishter."

Then he awkwardly took leave, and went out, followed to the door by Judy.

"I'll be at Longman's whiniver I'm wanted, Judy. And I'll be here twice a day, as sure as I live; but betwane the visits I'll be waiting on yez at Longman's, if wanted," he said, as he kissed his sister good-by.

Judy returned to Mrs. Moseley's sitting room, and resumed her work.

"Who taught you to darn so neatly with the knitting stitch, my dear?" inquired the lady.

"The Sisters of the Sacred Maternity. They know how to do every sort of needlework better than anybody else in the wurruld, I do think."

"It is growing too dark to work longer, my little girl; so we will stop," said Mrs. Moseley, a few minutes later.

"And, oh! if you plaise, ma'am, may I rin over to the hospital to see how me poor Ran is?" pleaded Judy.

"It is too late for you to be running about the grounds alone, child; besides, they would not let you go to Ran's bedside at present. I will send a messenger, who will bring me back the surgeon's report," replied the lady.

"Oh, I thank you on me knees, ma'am! Sure it's a saint on earth and an angel in hivin ye are all in one!" exclaimed Judy, fervently and sincerely, if a little incoherently. She did not suffer under poor Mike's complaint of difficult utterance in the presence of ladies.

The messenger was sent, but the report was not very satisfactory.

The patient's fever was high, and he must be kept quiet—positively quiet. No one must be allowed to come to him, not even his own betrothed.

"Never fret; you shall see him to-morrow, dear," said Mrs. Moseley, soothingly.

And Judy, in gratitude, tried to be cheerful.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE COLONEL'S RETURN

Mrs. Moseley kept Judy with her, and they sat up that evening long after the children had gone to bed, waiting for the colonel.

It was late when he returned to the fort, and the place was so quiet at the hour that the clatter of horses' hoofs coming through the gate announced his arrival.

He seemed very weary from his day's journey, but greeted his wife, the faithful companion of his many years of exile from civilized life, with as much warmth as if he had just returned from the antipodes, instead of from a neighboring fort.

Judy, having assisted the lady in bringing in the late supper from the pantry, bade good-night to her friends, and retired to her cosy little room.

The colonel told his wife that the news of the Indians' rising was true, though much exaggerated. They had raided some outlying ranches, and driven off cattle and burned barns, but that no murders had been committed as yet, and that prompt measures were already adopted for the suppression of the outbreak.

Mrs. Moseley in turn told the colonel of all that had happened during his absence—of the arrival of the two

miners from Grizzly Gulch, and their report of a dead body being found in the black woods, which was supposed to be that of the unfortunate man who had traveled in company with Randolph Hay, and who was further supposed to have been killed at the same time, and by the same hands that wounded Hay.

"A stop must be put to all this violence," said the colonel, gravely, as he left the table, his supper scarcely tasted, and seated himself in his armchair.

"A full report of the discovery will be made to you by the eye-witnesses of the body to-morrow," said Mrs. Moseley.

"Who are these men from Grizzly that brought the news?" he next inquired.

"Michael Man, the brother of Judy——"

"Oh!"

"And an old man, his companion, whose name has slipped my memory. They came on in search of Judy, and fell by chance upon the scene of the murder."

"Ah! Where are they now?"

"Stopping at Longman's, I understand; but they promised to be here to-morrow morning to make a full report to you."

"That is well," said the colonel.

Then he inquired after the wounded man in the hospital.

She explained the relapse of the patient as well as she was able to do it.

Soon after this conversation the pair retired to rest.

Anxiety for Ran's safety kept Judy awake nearly all that night. It was near morning when fatigue overcame uneasiness and she fell asleep; but not for any long time.

At sunrise she was aroused by the reveille. It did not frighten her as on the preceding morning, but it effectually startled her, for she immediately sprang out of bed. Her first thought was of Ran. She dressed herself in haste, and without waiting for breakfast, she sped away across the courtyard to the hospital to inquire after Ran.

She was met by the surgeon, who took her to his office, and in answer to her breathless inquiries, told her that his patient's fever still ran high—so high that the utmost quiet was absolutely necessary; that he was carefully watched by a veteran soldier of great skill and experience—"and

almost as good a doctor as I am myself," added the surgeon.

"And mayn't I see him one minute—just one minute?" pleaded Judy.

"No, my child; not one minute. He is in excellent hands now, and if you care for him you will be willing to leave him so," said Dr. Hill.

"If I care for him! If I care for me Ran! Just hear till the man!" exclaimed Judy.

"Well, you do care a great deal, of course; so you will leave him to me and the old veteran nurse until this fever shall subside, when you may come to him again," said the surgeon.

"But will the faver shubside, docther, dear? Will it shubside?" tearfully demanded Judy, wringing her hands.

"Why, certainly, of course it will. There, now, go back to Mrs. Moseley, like a dear little girl, and keep yourself quiet until you hear better news," said the surgeon, speaking much more hopefully than he had any just cause to do.

Judy bade him good morning, and hurried back to the colonel's quarters, where she was met in the front flower yard by Letty, the thirteen-year-old daughter of the house, who caught her hand, and said:

"Come, Miss Judy; I have been looking for you all over the house. They are all sitting down to table eating breakfast, and the coffee's all getting cold."

"And you out here, missing av yer morning male by waiting for me! Oh, the angil that ye are, Miss Litty! And sure ye could do nothing else, being yer own mither's daughter!" exclaimed Judy, effusively, but sincerely.

"Fiddle-dee, Judy," said the little lady, leading the way to the breakfast room.

Col. Moseley had finished breakfast and gone over to his adjutant's office.

Mrs. Moseley was at the head of the table attending to the wants of her numerous sons and daughters.

She welcomed Judy, and kindly inquired after Ran, and when she had received the rather unfavorable report of his condition she tried to comfort Judy by telling her that such cases had been very common in her past experience of head wounds, and that they almost always recovered, especi-

ally when the patient was young, and strong, and of previous habits, like Randolph Hay.

Judy listened gratefully and grew hopeful.

After breakfast, when the children were engaged with their lessons and Mrs. Moseley with her housekeeping affairs, Judy took her basket of stockings and sat on the front porch to work and watch for anyone who might be coming from the direction of the hospital that she might inquire after the condition of Ran.

But none came from that quarter.

Directly in front of her, across the green lawn and the flower beds, a hundred yards off, was the gate of the fort, with its guardhouses on each side, and a solitary sentinel pacing up and down. Through the gate came or went a soldier on leave, or on an errand; a hunter with game, though it was getting late in the season for that; a fisherman with fresh fish, a squaw, or an Indian boy of some friendly tribe, with chip baskets, mats, or moccasins to sell.

All these Judy watched with interest, even while keeping an eye on the path leading from the hospital.

Presently through the gate came a group that interested her—the colossal hunter, Samson Longman, the little old Grizzly miner, Dandy Quin, and her own twin brother, Mike Man. But they never came toward the colonel's quarters, which was directly before them, or turned toward the hospital, which stood on their left, but went straight toward the adjutant's office, which was on their right.

"And they never even looked at me," grumbled Judy to herself; and being of a lawless as well as a fearless disposition, she slipped the half-darned stocking off her hand, threw it into the workbasket, and ran bareheaded out of the porch and across the yard to the adjutant's quarters.

An orderly stopped her at the entrance.

"And why won't ye lave me go in?" she demanded.

"It's orders. The colonel's hearing the report of two men who found a dead body in the black woods," replied the soldier.

And then Judy sat down on a bench outside to wait.

She had not long to do so.

In less than half an hour the three men whom she had seen go in came out again.

"How d'ye do, Miss Judy?" hailed Longman.

"Mawning to ye, lass!" piped Dandy.

And Mike stooped and kissed her, and asked her how Ran was getting on.

"Half crazy wid the faver ye raised on him wid your gashly talk av murthered min, and skulls and skillipins! And whativir have ye all been up to, in yon, that you couldn't lave a dacent gurrl come in?" demanded Judy.

"We have been tilling the colonel about finding the body av poor Gintleman Geff, to be sure. And the colonel is going to sind an ambilince wid a coffin to fetch in the remains, sure—the remains, indade! Bones and ashes, and naught else!—to give 'em Christian burial in the cimitiry."

"Mike, I'm going my ways back to Mrs. Moseley. Where will ye be?" inquired Judy.

"I shill stay aboot here till the ambilince is riddy. Sure, Dandy and me and the hound hev got to go and show the way to the spot," returned Mike.

"And whin will ye lave?"

"In an hour's toime, I'm thinking."

"And whin will ye get back?"

"It will be late in the afternoon, I'm fearing."

"Well, I'm going," said Judy. And she scudded back to the colonel's quarters, where she seated herself on the front porch, and resumed her task of darning stockings.

At about nine o'clock a rude pine coffin, hastily "knocked together" and stained red by the regimental undertaker, and supplied with a pair of sheets from the hospital, was placed in an ambulance which was drawn by a pair of mules driven by Dandy, followed by Longman, Mike and the hound, and dispatched to receive and bring in the body of Gentleman Geff.

Judy, from her seat on the porch of the colonel's quarters, saw the procession pass through the gate.

She dropped her work and took up her rosary and began to say aves and paters for the repose of the dead man's soul.

She was still engaged in this devout task when Mrs. Moseley came out and joined her.

Then she put away her beads and resumed her work.

It was late in the warm afternoon when the strange funeral procession re-entered the fort gates.

The ambulance was driven directly to the front of the little fort chapel.

There it was drawn up. The coffin was taken out and laid on the bier, which was borne by four soldiers, with crape on their arms, into the chapel and laid before the little altar.

The coffin was closed. The body, or what was left of it, had been rolled in the two sheets, laid in the coffin and the lid had been screwed down.

The regimental chaplain was in his place, and as soon as the few spectators had taken their seats he commenced the funeral service according to the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

As soon as these rites were concluded the coffin was again lifted, placed on the bier and borne out of the chapel through the gates of the fort and to the little military cemetery, where a grave had been dug to receive it.

A few days later a plain oaken slab was placed at the head of the grave, with the following inscription:

To the memory of
GEOFFREY DELAMERE,
Who Died April 3, 18—.

And no one had the least doubt that the inscription, so far as it went, was right.

Very slow was the recovery of young Randolph Hay.

Michael Man and Andrew Quin went back to Grizzly.

Judy, under the protection of the colonel's wife, remained at the fort, but for many days she was not allowed to see Ran.

Mrs. Moseley grew very fond of the young girl, who made herself extremely useful to the overtaxed mother.

Judy, encouraged by Mrs. Moseley, was patient and hopeful until the day came when she was permitted to revisit her betrothed.

The meeting between them was cheerful and affectionate, but self-controlled on both sides by reason of the presence and the orders of the surgeon.

After this Judy was allowed to visit him every day.

But his restoration was more protracted than anyone could have foreseen.

It was weeks before he was able to sit up in a resting-chair and engage in any lengthened conversation.

And then Mrs. Moseley began to grow anxious and impatient.

"This inheritance ought not to be neglected," she urged, speaking to her husband. "If he is not capable of looking after it, some one else should do it in his interests. You, colonel, ought to take some steps."

"But, my dear love, no steps can be taken without him. Even if I were to write to the lawyer who advertised for the heir—and whose name and address unfortunately I do not know—and tell him that the heir was in my fort, and his name was Randolph Hay, what proof could I send with the letter? The attested copies of the records of his parents' marriage and his own birth and baptism are lost, and as I have never seen these copies, I know no more where to find the originals than where to look for the philosopher's stone—do you?"

"No, I don't; neither does Judy; but I do know that this young man is the son of Prof. Cuthbert Hay and his wife."

"You may know all this perfectly well, but you have no legal proof of it without the certificates of marriage, birth and baptism; and you don't know where to find these records any more than I or anyone else here does."

"Except young Hay himself, and he is too weak to be troubled with the business. And, in the meantime, some impostor may step in and deprive him of his inheritance."

"Oh, not likely. And, fortunately, as the estate consists mostly of entailed lands and houses, it cannot take wings and fly away."

"Still, I think something ought to be done, and done quickly," persisted the lady.

"When the young man is well enough to enter upon an exciting subject of conversation, he may give us data upon which to act," concluded the colonel.

With this the lady had to be satisfied. Yet she besieged the surgeon every day as to when it would be safe to talk to Ran Hay about his inheritance.

And every day the surgeon said:

"Not yet."

One day he volunteered to add:

"The young fellow shows not the slightest interest in

anything except the presence of his sweetheart. We must be patient with him. It is no trifle for a man to have had his skull fractured and his spine grazed."

At length, however, the day came when Ran himself broached the subject. It was to Judy that he spoke.

"Dearest," he said, as she sat beside his easy-chair, in the convalescent ward of the hospital, on one fine summer noon, "I have been very near 'that bourne whence no traveler returns,' and many earthly interests have faded from my thoughts, and almost from my memory; certainly from my anxious care, but not you, Judy; not you, dear, faithful girl! Ill or well, living or dying, sane or crazy, you have always been in my mind and in my heart."

"Sure, and I do know it, Ran."

"How brave and true and good you have been, Judy, through all this dark time."

"Oh, sure, Ran, it was the only comfort I had in the wurrld to be near ye whin ye naded me."

"Dear Judy! And how courageous you were to come alone through that perilous wilderness, where poor Gentleman Geff was murdered, and where I was robbed of all my gold and papers and left for dead! What might not have happened to you, dear?"

"Nothink. I had your dog to purtect me; and he did it, too. Ye should have seen him bristle up and defy the whole pack av wolves, which, how-and-ever, did pass by anither way; for it was not me they was after, be the same token, but just the blude av poor Gintilmin Geff. And ye should jist have seen him fly at Misther Longman and throttle him! Why, he would have ate that giant alive af I hadn't called him off. Oh, Tip took care av me, so he did."

"Bless that dog! I shall cherish him more than ever," said Ran. "But, Judy dear, it strikes me that I ought to be getting well and looking after our great inheritance; else, you know, James Jordan Hay, my father's younger brother, or his heirs, will be turning up and taking possession; and though, being the son of the elder brother, I might turn 'em out, yet it would cost time and money to eject them, for possession, you know, is nine points of the law. I think I must make haste and get well, Judy, for your sake as well as for mine."

"Yis, Ran, dear. And the docther and the colonel and the lady is all so anxious for ye to do that same. And git all the docterments and things from the courts and the churches and the saxtons to prove that yoursilf is yoursilf, and nixt av kin to that same great istate."

"The lady? Do you mean——"

"Misthress Colonel Moseley, to be sure!"

"How did she know anything about the estate, Judy, dear, when all the papers had been stolen from my pocket the night I was left for dead?"

"Och, sure wouldn't meself be bragging about ye! Sure I towld her all I knowed; and it's aiger she is to have ye git well, and go on to 'Frisco, to attind to yer bisniss."

"Perhaps I am staying too long at the fort, giving too much trouble," said poor Ran, very gravely.

"Och! no, no, no!" cried Judy, earnestly. "Sure it's a great divarsion ye have been to thim all! Och, no! I didn't mane divarsion at all, at all. I mane intherest! It's a great intherest ye have been in the lonesome fort—and oh, Lord, how lonesome it is. And the care av ye has been an amuse—I mane an ockipation like—and thrue as ye live, Ran, they do love ye like a brither. Indade, and that they do!"

"They have all been very kind to me," said Ran, gravely.

"And ye will take counsel with the docther, and the colonel, and the good lady, as to the manes to git your rights."

"Yes, Judy."

"Ye must know I have heard the colonel and the lady often talking together about you and your intherests. And I mind they agreed that it wasn't necessary for you to go to 'Frisco yourself in person, to git the doctermints; but ye could sind a missengir wid a letther to the praist or the sextant and git 'em jist as well."

"Yes, but I would rather go in person; and though the red devils have robbed me of every cent I had about me, as well as of my papers, yet I have some money in the Miners' Savings Bank, upon which I can draw," said Ran, reflectively.

"And will ye talk it all over wid the good lady and gentleman, and be guided by their exparience?" inquired the girl.

"Yes, Judy, I will do anything you wish," earnestly replied Ran.

CHAPTER XXXIV

RAN RECOVERS HIS FACULTIES

When Judy went back to the colonel's quarters, that day on which Ran had for the first time broached the subject of his neglected business, she hastened into Mrs. Moseley's sitting-room, and joyously exclaimed:

"Oh, ma'am, the saints be praised, me bhoy has begun to talk business, and it's sthrong and clear his head is getting, sure enough."

"I am very glad to hear it, Judy. Sit down, child, you are out of breath," replied the lady.

Judy dropped on the nearest seat and fanned herself with her hat.

Mrs. Moseley, seated as usual in her little sewing chair by a workstand piled with needlework, stitched on for a while in silence, for she did not wish to incite the breathless girl to further speech.

After a few minutes she said to the puzzled creature, who could not understand her silence:

"Now that you have ceased panting, you may tell me all about it, child."

"He talked of his great fortin, ma'am, and it should be luked afther at wanst, so he did. And he was for going off to 'Frisco to get more copies out'n the records—so he was; for he said if he didn't, some younger brother's son might git the big isteet, and it would then cost money—a dale av money and no ind of time, before he could git his rights ag'in."

"Did he talk so practically as that? Then I think he will soon be ready for business."

"And will ye sind his honor the colonel till him, ma'am, to advise with him what to do?" eagerly demanded Judy.

"After a while, my girl. I think your friend has had excitement enough for one day," smilingly replied the lady.

"To-morrow, thin?"

"To-morrow?—yes."

The entrance of the colonel interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.

He was told of Ran's improved condition and of his desire to go to San Francisco to collect evidence for the establishment of his claim to the great Hay estate.

"That is a very good sign," replied the colonel. "And just as soon as Hill pronounces him sufficiently convalescent to undertake the journey I will provide him with a comfortable ambulance and a safe escort through the forest, for we don't want any more broken heads brought home to us. In this way he can travel securely to Santa Agnetta, where he can take the regular line of stages to the railway junction at Rio Bello, and thence travel in civilized style to San Francisco."

"And will you see the young man to-morrow and talk this matter over with him?" inquired Mrs. Moseley, while Judy listened eagerly with open mouth, and eyes turning anxiously from one speaker to the other.

"Certainly, with much gratification; and shall call Hill into our counsel," said the colonel, smiling at the eager girl.

The announcement of dinner interrupted the conversation, and they filed into the dining-room, where they found all the dozen hungry girls and boys waiting. And, with the three grown people who entered last, fifteen souls sat down to table.

"There cannot be too many," the father was accustomed to say to anyone who made any remark on the number of his children.

"If only we can bring them all up, so as at the last day to be able to say, 'Here, Lord, are we and the jewels Thou hast intrusted to us,'" the mothed would add.

Not for the earth only, but for heaven, their children were borne and trained.

The next morning, as Randolph Hay was reported still improving and quite capable of attending to business, Col. Moseley kept his promise, and, in company with Dr. Hill, went to the ward where Ran sat in his easy-chair by the open window.

This was only the third time the colonel had ever called to see the patient, and the first time he had come since the boy's convalescence.

"I am heartily glad to see you getting on so well, Mr. Hay," he said, cordially, as he took a seat near Ran.

"And I am very glad at last to be able to thank you

sincerely and earnestly, colonel, for the great kindness shown me by yourself and family and your officers," said the young man, rising and bowing.

"Why, my dear fellow, you have nothing to thank us for. We have simply done our duty. How do you feel this morning? As well as you look?"

"Better, thank you, colonel. I cannot look very well with my hair dressed in the convict style," laughed Ran, with some of his old humor returning.

"It is clipped rather close to your head," lightly replied the colonel.

"It was shaved," put in Dr. Hill.

"Yes," continued Ran, in rueful humor, "fate not only robbed me of my money, my papers, my pipe, and my dear comrade, Gentleman Geff, but took the very hair off my head!"

"But it left your life," said the colonel.

"Yes, thank the Lord," replied Ran, reverently raising the skull cap from his crown and bowing.

"And your peerless sweatheart," added the colonel.

"The Lord bless her!" exclaimed Ran.

"You have had a hard bout of it, young man. And a very narrow escape. Skulls are not cracked every time with impunity."

"No, indeed, colonel. It has left a blank in my consciousness that can never be filled up this side heaven. I have no memory of being struck. The last I remembered at the beginning of the blank was singing a song of Moore's. The next I remembered at the end of that blank was the refrain of that same song, and then found myself, not singing at night in the woods, where I thought I was, but lying in bed in a strange place, in broad daylight. Those days were blotted out of my life. I wonder where my spirit was all that time? Or if I shall find out where it was when I get to the spirit world?"

"Perhaps," said the colonel, "but 'one world at a time,' as some one has wisely said or written. We have now to deal with practical matters on this earth. Do you feel equal to entering upon the discussion of your business?"

"Quite equal, colonel," said Ran.

"What is your opinion, Dr. Hill?"

"He is able to do it, sir."

"Very well. Then, my young friend, will you tell me the grounds upon which your claim to the great estate rests?" said the colonel, taking pencil and tablets from his pocket and preparing to make notes.

"Certainly, colonel, if an uninteresting family history will not bore you." said Ran.

And then he related, at some length, the history of the Hays, of Haymore, as it is already known to the reader.

"Your claim seems as clear as possible, and will surely be legally recognized if you can prove the facts stated," said the colonel, at the conclusion of the narrative.

"I think they are very easy of proof. The records of my father's and my mother's marriage; of my own birth and baptism, and of the death of my dear parents, are to be found on the parish register of the Church of Santa Maria, in San Francisco. The graves of my father and mother lie side by side with that of my grandfather, in the Rosa lot in the cemetery of Lone Mountain. I must say in explanation of this last statement, that although the deaths of my parents were far apart in time and place, it was I who brought them together in burial; for I conveyed my dear father's remains from the Morning Star Mines, where he died, all the long way to the church of Santa Maria, from which he was borne to the Lone Mountain Cemetery and laid beside his wife."

"Well, now, Mr. Hay, all this seems very plain sailing to me, who am, however, no judge, not even a lawyer. Now then, as you are not yet able to write an important letter, and as it is necessary to act with as little delay as possible, I must ask you to give me the name and address of that firm of attorneys who advertised for the heir of Haymore," said the colonel, turning a blank page of his tablets.

"How very kind you are to a poor devil, sir! I can never express how much I thank you!" fervently exclaimed Ran.

"Nonsense, nonsense, my good fellow! Give me the address of these attorneys. I must write to them to-day and give a brief of your case.'

"The firm is Walling & Walling, Judiciary Buildings, 111 Spark Street, New York City," replied Ran.

"Why, I know those fellows, or, at least, I know of them. A schoolmate of my wife married one of the firm. They

have a high standing in their profession," said the colonel, and he took down the address and rose to leave the room.

"Doctor!" he said, on leaving, "how soon may this young man be expected to set out and seek his fortune?"

"Within a week from to-day," replied the surgeon.

"That is a trifle vague. How much within a week?"

"It may be five, six or seven days, depending on his condition. I should say he would certainly be quite strong enough to set out on the eighth day from this, if not sooner."

"All right! Good-morning, Hill! Good-morning, Hay!" said the colonel, leaving the room.

He went straight to the adjutant's office, and wrote a long letter to Messrs. Walling & Walling, giving them a brief history of Randolph Hay's pedigree, and proofs by which he, the heir, felt sure of establishing his claim to the Haymore estate, and ended by informing them that the young gentleman in question was then at the fort, and would travel northward to wait on them as soon as his recovery from a severe head wound would enable him to do so, which the writer thought would be in eight or ten days.

Having signed, sealed and directed this letter, the colonel put it in the adjutant's mail bag, which was to leave the fort at noon, sharp, for Santa Agnetta, which contained the post-office on the United States mail route.

"That's off my mind!" said the veteran, as he left the adjutant's quarters.

The colonel had a very fine office of his own; but as it was under the same roof with his wife and numerous children, and not unfrequently invaded by the former, or one or more of the latter, he chose to do most of his writing in the office of the young adjutant, who, having no relatives, lived alone, and was very fond of his colonel as well as of his colonel's fifteen-year-old daughter, Betty.

Randolph Hay grew stronger every day. It was on Thursday that the interview with the colonel and the surgeon had taken place. After that he seemed determined to get well fast.

On Friday he came out and sat on a bench in front of the hospital, and felt strengthened by the change, and the fresh air and sunshine.

On Saturday he took a walk with Judy in the grounds

behind the hospital, and felt ever so much better for the exercise.

On Sunday he attended divine worship in the chapel, and sat through the whole service without fatigue, and he felt incalculably refreshed in soul as well as in body for the privilege.

On Monday morning he received an invitation to dine with the Moseley family at the colonel's quarters. He was delighted with this attention, and he accepted it, although he had again to be indebted to Jim Moseley, the colonel's seventeen-year-old son, who had loaned him a suit to wear to church, which fitted him as if it had been made for him, for though Ran was twenty-two years old, he was but a "little nigger," as he called himself, while everyone else called him a very handsome little fellow, with his rich dark complexion, large black eyes, and curling black hair.

So Ran dined at the colonel's table, to the great delight of Judy, who admired him in his store clothes more than she had ever admired him before. He offended in no point of table etiquette; for though his life had lately been a rough one among the mines, yet he had been born and bred a gentleman, and easily dropped his camp manners, and resumed those of the drawing-room.

Judy was charmed! She scarcely knew Ran! His long illness had prepared him for this change; it had bleached his complexion, refined his features, and softened and whitened his hands; and in a well-fitting, black cloth suit, with snow-white linen bosom, collar and cuffs, he really looked so elegant that all were pleased with him, and Judy enchanted.

"Ah," she said to herself, as she stole a glance at him, "it's not Ran at all, at all, that nades the scrubbing and scouring and gineral polishing up av a schule to make a gintleman av him! He is a gintleman alriddy made, if ye plaise! 'Born so, sir,' as the dumb beggar said to the banker. Och, but it's misilf that nades all that polishing! Worra! worra! they'll have to polish the skin aff the body av me and the body aff the sowl av me, before they could make me a leddy fit to be Misthress Randolph Hay av Haymore! If I didn't hev sech faith in himself I should be fearing as some fine, edicated, beautiful leddy would take me Ran away from me! But no! that will never be! Ran

is Ran! And nobody could say no betther av him, and no betther of no human creetur than that!" concluded Judy.

She could not talk much at dinner. She felt shyer than she had ever felt before. She only answered when spoken to, and always in monosyllables. "Yes, ma'am." "No, sir," or the reverse of these, as the case might be.

The colonel turned the conversation on mining, a subject on which Ran could talk fluently and intelligently, and Judy listened and learned more of mining than she had ever even imagined to be in the subject.

After dinner, the whole party went out on the broad front piazza to enjoy the beautiful summer afternoon.

While still talking she saw the mail wagon, which had been dispatched to Santa Agnetta, early that morning, slowly entering the fort gates.

The mail came only twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. And these two were the most exciting days of the seven, for they brought not only letters from Eastern friends, but they brought newspapers with intelligence from all parts of the civilized world. The wagon slowly approached and drew up at the adjutant's quarters. An orderly came out and took the mail bag and carried it on to the office, and then the wagon drove off again out of sight.

Presently a soldier came out of the adjutant's office, with a large parcel of newspapers and letters in his hands.

He saluted and laid the parcels on a little stand beside the colonel.

There was an immediate gathering and buzzing around the stand. All the elder children had hurried up to get hold of the illustrated papers and magazines, which their father unrolled and distributed to them.

Mrs. Moseley was busy with the little pile of letters.

Judy and Ran looked on, until the colonel, having discharged the flock of children laden with "picture papers," turned to offer some of the newspapers to them. All were soon silently engaged in reading, when Mrs. Moseley, who had an open letter before her, over which she alternately smiled and frowned, suddenly exclaimed:

"Good gracious!"

"What is the matter? Who is that from?" inquired the colonel, looking up from his paper.

"Oh, it is from Augusta."

"One of your numerous old schoolmates?"

"Yes, of course. Augusta Lampson, you know. She married Samuel Walling. She lives in a fashionable quarter of New York now, and is always in a whirl of gayety. Her letter—an interminable one—is full of the last society news. And——"

The lady paused suddenly in the full flow of her discourse and fixed her eyes upon the letter in her hand, as if she were reading to reassure herself as to some of its contents.

"Well?" said the colonel, who had not taken his eyes off her.

"I'll tell you," replied his wife; and then turning to Ran, she inquired:

"My young friend, are you quite sure that you are Randolph Hay?"

Ran looked up suddenly from behind the paper he was reading with Judy, who sat close beside him, and said, in a bewildered sort of way:

"I—I beg your pardon, madam——"

"I asked you if you are sure that you are Randolph Hay," repeated the lady, without the least appearance of jesting, but very gravely and anxiously.

Ran was too much astonished at the question to reply promptly; but as Mrs. Moseley continued to look for an answer, he said, at length:

"Why, I am as sure of it as I can be of anything in life. May I inquire why you ask?"

"Let me see your left hand, Mr. Hay," she said, without replying to his query. Ran held out his well-shaped hand, which had grown thin and white during his long confinement. The lady took it, looked at it and examined a slight malformation, which could not be detected if the owner of the hand chose to conceal it.

"Oh!" laughed Ran, "you are looking at my germ of a little finger. It is a family peculiarity."

"Yes, I know it is," said the lady. "And I know that you are Randolph Hay. I don't know why I should have questioned the fact."

"But who does question the fact? Dolly, dear, your behavior is strange, not to say mysterious," said the colonel,

who had not ceased to regard her with interest and curiosity.

"Well, I will tell you. Since this young gentleman is surely Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore, there is certainly an impostor in New York who is flourishing around in the borrowed plumes of that same name!" said Mrs. Moseley.

"What?" demanded the colonel, bending his iron-gray brows.

"Sure and I thought so!" exclaimed Judy. "A foine isteet the loike av that couldn't be hawked around in the newspapers long without some thaif av the wurruld claiming av it!"

"I think I understand. It is what I also feared. If there is a Randolph Hay in New York claiming the heirship of Haymore, he must be a son of James Jordan Hay, my father's younger brother; and he is, of course, ignorant of my existence and prior right, and, of course, entirely innocent of imposture, Judy, dear," said Ran, addressing the first part of his conversation to the lady and gentleman and the last clause to his sweetheart.

Ran was singularly free from suspicions of evil.

"I fancy that must be the case, Dolly. For you must remember the attorney's advertisement, in ignorance of the existence of our young friend here, really called for James Jordan Hay, or his heirs. This New York man must, therefore, be the son of the latter. Only the identity of the name is a strange coincidence. That is the only suspicious part of the whole affair. Strange that there should be another Randolph Hay," said the colonel, thoughtfully.

"Oh, no, not at all, if you will excuse me. Randolph is a very old family name and frequently recurs in our pedigree," Ran explained.

"Ah! that changes the aspect of the affair," said the colonel.

"But don't you want to hear all about it from Mrs. Walling's letter?" rather eagerly inquired Mrs. Moseley.

"Yes! yes!" cried the colonel.

"If you please, madam," added Ran.

"Sure I knows he is an imposture, all the same, how and ivir!" muttered Judy, *sotto voce*.

"Now stop talking and listen," exclaimed Mrs. Moseley.

"After writing a lot of society gossip, Augusta Walling goes on in this way.

" 'But all that I have told you is nothing to the coming event, which is the talk of all the boudoirs and club rooms of the city.

" 'The approaching marriage of Randolph Hay, Esquire, of Haymore, in England, and Miss Lamia Hay Leegh, of some other place in England, I forget what.

" 'There is a halo of romance about these forthcoming nuptials, that caused them to be more talked about than they would otherwise have been.

" 'First as to the bridegroom-expectant, Mr. Randolph Hay. He was found by advertisement issued from my husband's firm—Walling & Walling, who acted under the instruction of their London correspondent, Messrs. ——.

" 'Oh, dear! I don't mean the bridegroom was found by advertisement, but the heir was.

" 'You must know that Squire Hay, of Haymore, died intestate a few months ago. That did not matter much, as far as the estate was concerned, for it was strictly entailed. But there was a vast personal property, which, in default of a will, would, of course, go with the landed estate. So the next of kin was called for by advertisement, and appeared in Walling & Walling's office in the person of this very handsome man, Randolph Hay. He had every document with him to prove his lineal descent from the deceased squire, and after full investigation his claim was allowed.

" 'He was a perfect stranger in New York, so Sam brought him to our house and introduced him in our circle.

" 'Among other houses to which he introduced the stranger was that of Peter Vansitart's, the banker's. You know who the Vansitarts are, of course, for they have a wide reputation in the financial world.

" 'Well, there it was he met the beautiful woman who is to be his bride. It was a case of mutual love at first sight, I think; for in a very few weeks they were engaged. He had to run over to England to take formal possession of his estate, or to transact some other business connected with it; but a "run" it was indeed, for he was back again within a month, in time to join his bride-elect, who was with the Vansitarts at Newport.

" 'And now as to the bride-elect. She is also of noble

English family, being the daughter of the late Hon. and Rev. Archibald Leegh, of Edge Vicarage, and the niece of the present Baron Leegh, of Edge Castle—Hantz. I have got the place at last.

" 'Through reverses of fortune and great independence of mind, she turned her accomplishments to account by accepting the situation of governess in the family of Mr. Peter Vansitart, where indeed she is treated with the affection of a beloved daughter and the consideration of an esteemed guest at the same time.

" 'She was the chief attraction at all their parties and receptions, and very few, I think, knew her real position in the family. You see, they brought her with them from England, and people supposed her to be a distinguished visitor.

" 'Well, they are to be married on Thursday, the first of October. Mrs. Vansitart has provided a magnificent trousseau for the bride, and the presents of the bridegroom, already on exhibition at the Vansitart mansion, are superb.

" 'Think of an India shawl at five thousand dollars and a point lace handkerchief at five hundred! I don't quite believe that report myself.

" 'But there! I have bored you long enough with this wedding. Immediately after the marriage the "happy pair" are to sail for Europe.'

"That is all; now what do you think of that?" inquired Mrs. Moseley.

"I think they will feel very bad when the rightful heir arrives," said the colonel.

"The first of October! I could barely reach New York in time to stop the marriage," mused Ran. "And I do suppose they would pay no attention to a letter or telegram, unaccompanied by proofs," he added.

"But why should you wish to prevent the marriage?" inquired Mrs. Moseley.

"Because if the lady and gentleman are marrying on the basis of the Hay fortune with the false expectation of living at Haymore, it would be kind to tell them the truth in time," said Ran.

"My dear young fellow, you have nothing to do with their marriage, or with their future prospects after you shall have taken possession of Haymore. All the kindness

you can show them will be to refrain from compelling your kinsman to refund the thousands of dollars he has derived from the Haymore estate and spent in extravagance," said Col. Moseley.

"I should certainly provide for my kinsman, if I should discover him to be without resources. I do not believe in the justice of giving the whole of the patrimony to one heir."

"That's me jewel av a Ran!" burst in Judy, with enthusiasm. "There isn't a silfish vein in the body av him! But Ran is Ran! an' if yer was to use up all the dicshinary from A to Izzard, you could not call him anything betther nor that!"

"Oh, Judy! Judy! would you make me out 'too good for this world,' and so lose me altogether?" laughed Ran.

But the colonel interrupted this chaffing with serious words.

"It appears to us, Hay, that you should lose no time in attending to this business," he said.

"I think with you, colonel, and will set out as soon as the surgeon will give me leave. I am under his orders, and must obey them, if not in my own interests, as I believe it would be, at least in gratitude to him."

"If you continue to improve you may set out on Thursday—not a day sooner," said the doctor.

And then, as the chill of evening was coming on, the party broke up.

Mrs. Moseley sent all her children indoors, and as soon as her guests took leave she followed them.

Judy lingered until she watched the surgeon and his patient out of sight, and then she joined Mrs. Moseley and the children in the sitting-room.

The colonel walked off to the adjutant's office to smoke a pipe with his favorite.

So ended the Moseley dinner party.

CHAPTER XXXV

RAN GOES TO SEEK HIS FORTUNE

THE next morning some preliminary preparations to "speed the parting guest" were put in progress.

A "committee of ways and means" was formed, consisting of the colonel and Mrs. Moseley, Dr. Hill, Ran and Judy.

When several other matters connected with the journey had been discussed, the colonel, in a frank and fatherly way, without the least shade of patronage, in tone or manner at which the most sensitive nature might take offense, said:

"Now, my dear boy, you will require funds for your journey to San Francisco, and as you have been robbed of every dollar about you, you must let me have the pleasure of being your banker until you come into your fortune, or at least until you can draw upon your family solicitors."

"A thousand thanks, dear sir," fervently exclaimed Ran. "I have some money in the Miners' Savings Bank, at 'Frisco, and though my bank book is gone—stolen with the rest of my papers—yet I remember exactly the amount. It was seven hundred and ninety-nine dollars—no cents," he added, humorously.

"Well, that is a very good little sum to start with," smiled the colonel.

"Yes; but it might as well be in Kamchatka, for any present use it can be to me here," said Ran, with a grewsome smile.

"Not at all!—not at all!" cheerfully exclaimed the colonel. "Do you draw a check for any amount you may wish, make it payable to my order, and I will cash it."

"Oh! thanks, more than I can express!" earnestly exclaimed Ran; and then his good humor rising to the ascendant, he added: "But, colonel, how do you know that it is safe to trust me? Suppose I should have no money in that bank, and should go off with yours?"

For the first time the colonel looked at the young man rebukingly.

"My young friend," he answered, gravely, "gentlemen never suppose such cases in regard to each other."

"I beg your pardon, colonel. That robbery and attempted murder in the wood has demoralized me to some extent," said Ran.

"Not at all; and aside from the rule I have quoted, Mr. Hay, I have every reason to place implicit confidence in your integrity. It should not be necessary for me to tell

you this. And now let us change the subject. Draw your check at once. I am going to the paymaster's quarters."

Mrs. Moseley brought pen, ink and paper, and placed them on a little table near the young man. Ran had no form, but he remembered and wrote out his check for a very modest sum, considering it was to buy him a suit of clothes, shoes, and a hat, from the post-trader, and to pay his stage and railway fare to the city.

He handed it to the colonel.

"Only for fifty dollars! Tut, tut, boy! that will never do; make it double that, at least," said the latter, when he had examined the paper. "Come, come; don't hesitate; obey promptly."

Ran received back the check, tore it up, and wrote another for the amount recommended by the colonel, and handed it to him.

"That's better," said the old soldier, as he took the paper and walked out of the room, followed by the surgeon.

The next consideration was Judy. What should be done with the girl after the departure of her lover?

Judy had not once thought of that question; but Ran had thought of little else, even in regard to his fortune.

As soon as the two officers had left the parlor, Ran went and sat down by Judy, took her hand, and addressing himself to Mrs. Moseley, said: ,

"Madam, I hope you will not think me indiscreet, but I have been trying to persuade this little girl to let the chaplain marry us at once, that she may go East with me. I cannot bear to part with her. Why should we be separated? Why should we not marry and go away together? She could go to school afterward if she should wish, as I shall go to college."

"But surely that plan would separate you," said Mrs. Moseley, kindly and sympathetically.

"But not with the length and breadth of the continent between us. We could live in the same city; Boston, for instance. I could enter Harvard, after due preparation, and she could enter some private school, or even have a private governess. We could see each other frequently; and we should belong to each other and feel sure of each other."

"What does Judy say?" inquired the lady, turning to the girl.

"'July' says it cannot be at all, at all, ma'am," said the latter, raising tearful eyes to the face of her benefactress. "If I thought for mesilf, ma'am, and me own pleasure and happiness, I would do it. Yis, this moment. But I mustn't think of mesilf, ma'am. I must think av Ran. It would not be for Ran's good, ma'am."

"But why?" inquired Mrs. Moseley, more for the purpose of drawing out Judy's reasons than from any disposition to differ from her.

"I—I—don't know why, ma'am; but I feel that sure it wouldn't be good for Ran to be a married man whin he begins his collidge. Because ye do know, ma'am, that collidges is for bachilors," she replied.

"It is for your sake, dear girl, as well as for my own, that I wish we should be married at once. If we should be bound to each other, then we should never be in doubt of each other," said the young man.

"Oh, Ran, you could nivir doubt me!"

"No, my dear girl, I could never doubt you."

"And do ye think I could iver doubt you, Ran? Nivir! I don't need to tell you that. But I want ye to be free and aisy when ye go away, Ran. Yis. I want ye to be so free, that if sich a thing could be as ye should change yer mind about me, ye should do as ye plaise," said Judy.

But as she said this her eyes overflowed with tears.

Ran took her hand, and again tried to move her to consent to an immediate marriage; but all in vain. Judy, when she had once made up her mind that she was right, could be as stubborn as a mule, or more so.

After a while the colonel came in, put a roll of greenbacks in Ran's hand, saying:

"You will find them all right, my boy, and can have more if you require them."

"I thank you again, colonel, very, very much," replied Ran, as he arose to take leave.

"Will you take a walk with me, Judy?" he inquired, when he had bid good-evening to Col. and Mrs. Moseley.

"Yis, sure, Ran!" quickly replied the girl; and she seized her straw hat that lay on the table beside her, and went with him out into the grounds.

As soon as they were gone, Mrs. Moseley told her husband of the discussion that had taken place during his

absence from the room, of Ran's wish to marry Judy immediately and take her with him to the East, and of Judy's firm refusal to comply with his wish.

"She says if she thought only of her own happiness that she would gladly consent, but that she must think of Ran's good; and she knew that the marriage at this time would not be for his good, though she could not tell why—or words to the same effect."

"And the girl is right," said the colonel; "her intuition leads her to a just conclusion, although she may not be able to give her reasons. They must not marry now. They are too young. They need to go to college and to school, and the plan he proposes is perfectly impracticable. If they should marry now, good-by to school and college. It would not be human nature for them, having their perfect free agency, to part to go to school and college when they might live together. The girl is right, even if she cannot 'give a reason for the faith that is in her.'"

"What is to be done with her in the meantime?" inquired Mrs. Moseley.

"Keep her with you until she goes to school."

"As if our family were not large enough already!" exclaimed the lady, with a bright smile that modified the meaning of her words. "But, in fact, I am very glad to have the child, and it was kind of you to think of it, Enos."

Later in the day, when Mrs. Moseley found herself alone with Judy, she said:

"You have been a very bright and industrious little girl since you have been with us, Judy, and I feel so much regret at the very thought of losing you that I must really beg you to stay with me until you go to school. Will you do so?"

"Is it to stay here wid yersilf, ma'am, you mane?"

"Yes, Judy."

"Sure, and I thank ye, ma'am. Sure, and I know it is not out av the use I could be till ye, ma'am, but out av yer kindness ye ask me to stay. And, sure, it wad jist be the plisure av my life to stay wid ye. It would, indade, ma'am. And it will be the grafe av me sowl to lave ye. But, sure, I must go, ma'am," said the girl, her blue eyes filling with tears, which she quickly wiped away with the corner of her apron.

"But why should you leave me if you do not want to go?" kindly inquired the lady.

"Sure, ma'am, yerself knows that duty is duty. I kem here, warrund by a dhrame, to look afther me poor Ran, and I stayed here till he got on his feet ag'in. Sure it was me duty to do that. Now me dear Ran is well, and gwine to sake his fortin, which is alriddy waiting for him. And now me duty is done here, I must go."

"But, my dear girl, where will you go?"

"Where me ither duty calls me, ma'am—to me brither, Mike."

"To Grizzly! To that horrid mining camp!"

"It isn't horrid, ma'am, saving your prisince. And my brither is my twin brither, and we was all in all ta aich ither, having nayther kith nor kin in the wurruld but our two silves. And now, though I have Ran, he has nobody but me—not even a swateheart; so ye see, ma'am, he is lonesome like, and I must go till him and stay wid him till Ran comes back, or sinds for us both, as he promised to do."

"So Mr. Hay is going to do something for Mike?"

"Yis, ma'am—pit him intil some gintale business."

"Well, Judy, dear, I am sorry that you have decided to go back to Grizzly; but how do you propose to get there, my child?"

"Och, sure, the same way I got here—take me fut in me hand and walk."

"Oh, that will never do. You cannot go alone through the wilderness."

"But, sure, I wouldn't be alone. I'd have Ran's dog wid me."

"That is not safeguard enough."

"Thin I could ask Misther Longman to see me safe through the woods."

"But that would never do, either, Judy. No child. I must get the colonel to send a messenger to Grizzly to fetch your brother. Only with your brother can I allow you to go through the wilderness."

"Oh, misthress, I'll thank you on me bindid knees for that same, if it will not be troubling the colonel too much," said Judy, in an ardent tone of voice, that showed haw much she had secretly dreaded a lonely pilgrimage through the deep wilderness.

Still later in the day, Mrs. Moseley, finding herself again *tête-à-tête* with her husband, explained Judy's position—her fixed conviction that it was her duty to return to her brother, to await Ran's future action, and her resolution to go to Grizzly. And then the lady made her request that the colonel would send a messenger to Grizzly to fetch Mike.

The colonel promptly agreed to dispatch a man on that errand early the next morning.

Ran, when he heard of the proposed measure, disapproved of it, but as Judy was firm in her own convictions of duty, he would not distress her by vain opposition.

"I would not interfere with Judy's moral free agency on any account," he said.

Ran was to leave the fort on Thursday, en route for San Francisco and New York.

So that night, when the friends separated and retired, all their plans for the near future had been arranged.

In the morning the messenger was to set out for Grizzly.

The man selected for the duty, on account of his sobriety, fidelity and general reliability, was Dick Talboys.

He stood at the door of the adjutant's quarters equipped for his journey, and holding the bridle of his mule in his hand, waiting for the colonel's last instructions, when who should walk up and salute but the very youth who was wanted—Mike Man!

"Why, Michael!" exclaimed the colonel. "Talk of the devil and his imps appear!" I was just in the act of sending off Talboys to fetch you!"

"Yis, surr? And, sure, I'm proud to be here, if wanted. Is it about Judy, surr? And is she well, if you plaise?" inquired Mike, rather anxiously.

"Yes, it is about Judy, and she is quite well. But Mr. Hay leaves us on Thursday, to look after his affairs in New York and in London, and Judy declines Mrs. Moseley's invitation for her to stay at the fort, and insists on returning to Grizzly to keep your house. So I was about to send for you to come and fetch her.

"And is me poor Judy crack-brained, that she wud go to the rough and rowdy camp, when she could have a safe and gintale home here wid the colonel's lady, and make hersilf useful to the family, besides?" demanded Mike.

"We have not been able to persuade her to change her mind, but perhaps you may," replied the colonel.

"Indade, and I will, surr. I kem here only to take lave av her. Me and Ben and Dandy, and three others av the bhoys, are on our way to the silver mines av Colerady."

"Do you wish to see your sister? She is over there at the quarters, with Mrs. Moseley," said the colonel.

"Indade I do, surr, I thank ye mist kindly," said Mike, making two or three deep bows before he set off at a brisk walk for the piazza on which he saw Judy sitting at her needlework.

She happened to raise her eyes, saw him, sprang up and ran across the lawn to meet him.

"Oh, Mike, how glad I am to see ye. We were jist goin' to sind for ye," she exclaimed, throwing her arms around her brother's neck.

"So the colonel said," replied Mike, as he kissed her. "I am glad I saved him the throuble," he added.

"But though mesilf is delighted to see ye, I wad like to know whativir brought ye here, Mike, darlint, so unexpicted, yet in sich good time, eh?"

"Come and sit down on this binch here, Judy; sure I want to spake till yersilf, before I go up to the house to pay me rispicts to the leddy."

They sat down side by side on the lawn seat, and Mike said:

"I have lift Grizzly, and sold the twin huts with all the furnitur and chickens and hin coops, for what I could git for 'em, Judy, about twinty-five dollars in goold dust, and mesilf, Ben, Dandy asd a lot av ithir bhoys are laving for the Colerady silver mines. I hev come to tek lave of ye, Judy, and to give ye the twinty-five dollars I got for the property," he said.

Judy was so astonished, that although Mike had spoken slowly, with pauses, she never once interrupted him by a word, but sat staring at him with open mouth as well as open eyes.

"Well, gurrul, what hev ye got to till me?"

Judy said nothing just then. She was utterly taken by surprise and she really did not know whether she was glad or sorry to be relieved from the "duty" if going back to her rough, hard life at Grizzly and permitted to remain at her

congenial and comfortable quarters at the fort. At length seeming to see a solution of her problem, she inquired slowly and hesitatingly:

"Why cant' I go along wid ye, and cook and wash for ye in the silver mines as well as in the goold ones?"

"Hear the gurrul! Because there's not a woman in the company."

"All the more raison I should make one."

"All the more raison ye shouldn't stur a fut. The min won't have a ruff to pit their heads under whin they git there. They hev got it all to get riddy before frost. It wouldn't be safe for ye, Judy."

"I'm not afraid av nothink."

"Will, thin, it wouldn't be—dacint for ye to go. Div ye hear me, Swishther Judy? It wouldn't be dacint!"

"Och! will, thin, encugh said. I'll not go! There! Now thin, Mike, I don't mind about the things ye sold, but how could ye have the harrt to sill the chickens? Sure I'm riddy to cry me eyes out about the craythurs!"

"Mither av Moses! Judy, I couldn't bring 'im along wid me. And I wouldn't kill and ate them. So I jist sold 'em to Biddy McCan, and med her promise me on the holy rosary that she wouldn't kill one av thim, but would kape 'im as you did, for the eggs, sure."

"That's me darlint Mike! And now, another thing; if I lave ye go widout me, whin will I see ye ag'in?"

"At Christmas, plaise the Lord."

"Thin I'll not graive mesilf to death about your going, sure," said Judy.

"And now I'll go and pay me duty to the leddy," said Mike, rising and walking toward the colonel's quarters, where Mrs. Moseley sat sewing on the front piazza.

She had been very much surprised at the sudden sight of Mike when the latter had first come; and now she received him very kindly, and waited for his explanation.

But it was Judy who impulsively exclaimed:

"Oh, ma'am, dear! Sure, Mike is laving to seek his fortin in the silver mines, and will not have me to kape house for him because he will have no house to kape. He has come to take lave of me till Christmas, and I can stay wid you if ye will have me."

"I will have you with pleasure, dear child, and I am

really glad that you are not going to leave me," cordially replied the lady.

At this moment Ran came up, started with surprise at seeing Mike, and then shook hands with him.

Mike explained, for the fourth time that morning, the object of his sudden visit to the fort.

Ran was delighted with the changed aspect of affairs.

It was so much better for every reason that Judy should remain with Mrs. Moseley, than that she should go back to the mining camp.

"And betwuxt you and me and the gate post," whispered Mike, in an aside to Ran, "that same was one av the raisons why I bruk up at Grizzly. Whin I was here before I seen how much betther it was for the gurrul to be here wid the leddy as wanted her, nor wid mesilf in the camp. So I saized the first excuse to break up."

"It was very disinterested, very considerate, very commendable of you, Michael," said Ran, taking and warmly pressing his friend's hand.

"Now don't be afther laying on yer sthore langwidge on me, Ran! Why don't ye slap me on the shoulther and say, 'Mike, ye're a brick!'"

"'Mike, ye're a brick!'" said Ran, laughing.

Mike stayed another hour, and then took leave of all his friends, kissed his sister, and left her in tears that he knew would soon be dried by Ran's devotion, and went out to join his comrades, who were camped on the outside of the fort about a mile further on and were only waiting for him to resume their march toward the silver mines of Colorado.

Here they were joined by Longman, the hunter, who determined to go with them.

On Thursday morning Ran took leave of his kind friends at the fort, reserving Judy for his last uttered good-by.

As Mrs. Moseley pressed his hand at parting, she said:

"It is I who will undertake the first course of Judy's education. It will be a pleasure to me and to her also, she will be so quick to learn."

"God bless you, madam. I have no other words in which to utter my deep gratitude," said Ran, his voice trembling with emotion.

Then he turned to Judy:

"Good-by, darling of darlings! Truest of true hearts! I shall write to you from San Francisco, where I expect to spend but one day. It will take me no longer to get the attested copies of records and the affidavits I require. Then I will write from every stopping place on the route to New York. Good-by, good-by!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

"THE WICKED FLOURISH"

GENTLEMAN GEFF was borne onward on the highest wave of prosperity and popularity.

To him fortune had not only come with both hands full, but followed by an express van and messenger boy, both loaded down with offerings, as it were;

Gentleman Geff was in his glory.

Is it true, that on his conscience, or rather in his consciousness, were two great crimes; but he did not call them crimes; he called them fate.

If at lonely times he grew "morbid" over the memory of them, he drank freely, then wondered why they had ever troubled his mind at all, since he was so safe from suffering any inconvenience in this world, and since he did not believe in a future one.

He had every reason to think that his crimes were hidden too deeply ever to be discovered.

As for the "removal" of young Randolph Hay ever being traced to him, why, that he deemed impossible. The body of the youth, or what the birds and beasts of prey had left of it—the bare bones—were bleaching in that inaccessible ravine of the rocks into which he himself, Gentleman Geff, had rolled it.

And to make security doubly sure, had he not read an item in the New York *Trumpeter,* copied from the Californian *Leader,* describing the discovery, in the heart of the black woods, of the dead body of a man, afterward identified as that of Mr. Geoffrey Delamere, and interred with Christian rites in the military cemetery of Fort Black Heath.

Yes, Ran Hay and Gentleman Geff were settled forever;

and out of their ashes arose the splendid fireworks of his own fortune as Randolph Hay, Esquire, of Haymore.

And then that later deed done in the dead of night, in the deserted street of the crowded city? Had not the death of the girl been ascribed to suicide? At least that was the last he read of her case before he left the city, and thinking it settled in a "suicide's" grave, he took no further interest in it.

If his eyes had not been "holden," he might have seen such lines as these in succeeding papers:

"The girl, Jennie Montgomery, who attempted to commit suicide is still living, though in a precarious conditon," etc., etc.

But they escaped his notice, so that when he returned to the city he had no shadow of a misgiving or suspicion of danger.

The Vansitarts had returned to their city house, which, during the last month of their absence, had been thoroughly renovated, decorated and refurnished. All that wealth, art and skill could do to make the interior that of a splendid and luxurious palace was done, and the family settled down for the autumn and winter in their princely home.

Mr. Randolph Hay was a constant visitor, and the wedding day drew near.

Meanwhile, how fared it with poor Jennie Montgomery and her child?

Since the "fiasco" of Cleve Stuart's arrest, the police had ceased to trouble her with questions as to the identity of her murderous assailant, and as the girl was getting well and was obstinately silent on the subject, and as the public interest in it had subsided, they quietly dropped the case, and started off, hot foot, on fine fresh scents after new criminals. Every day brought many new ones to give them employment.

Youth and a strong constitution, with the best medical science and best nursing, had saved Jennie's life, but she convalesced very slowly.

She passed most of her days seated in a resting-chair in the convalescent ward. As she regained her strength her beauty improved. A very touching type of beauty it was—a

slender but well-rounded form, a shapely head, covered with rippling curls of chestnut hair; a baby face with a fair forehead, a little pug nose, pouting lips, curved chin, deep blue eyes, and pale rose cheeks.

The child's face was a tiny miniature of her own.

As she sat wrapped in the white flannel gown of the hospital wardrobe, with her baby, swathed in linen and flannel, lying across her knees, she formed a very lovely picture.

The visitors at the hospital, especially the women, became very much interested in her case. She would tell them, however, no more than she had already told the nurse—that she was the only child of the Rev. James Campbell, curate of Medge, in Hantz, England; and that she was the wife of Capt. Kightly Montgomery.

When questioned as to her means of living, and her movements, she admitted that she had no means, but that as soon as she should leave the hosptal she should try to get work to earn money enough to return to her father and mother, who were pining to see her, and who would take her and her child to their home and hearts; and in proof of her words she showed her marriage certificate and her father's letters to herself.

The women consulted among themselves over a five o'clock tea at Mrs. Duncan's—one of their number—as to what had best be done to help this poor young creature.

As to her being able to support herself and child, and save money enough to go to England, even by a steerage passage—the plan was not only impracticable, but absurd. The city was overstocked with needlewomen, who were working at starvation wages.

What, then, could be done for poor Jennie Montgomery?

At length Mrs. Duncan, their hostess—a kind-hearted, straightforward young woman—said:

"What is the use in trying to provide for the poor child in New York? Let us raise the money by subscription, and give her and her baby a nice outfit, and buy her a first-class ticket in one of the best steamers, and send her home to England and to her parents. That is the best to do for her."

"So it is! So it is!" several voices responded, and the proposition was received with *éclat*.

A subscription was started then and there. Each of the

women present put down her name for a sum according to her means—or her liberality—and they appointed Mrs. Duncan treasurer.

"We will only call on our own immediate friends and relatives for aid in this work. We need not go out of our inner circle. I shall call on the Vansitarts and Miss Leegh. They are noted for their benevolence, and at a joyous time like this, when they are preparing for a grand wedding, their hearts must be singularly open to pity for this poor, deserted young creature—'a widow in fate, though not in fact.' I shall call there to-morrow morning. And you will all please to meet me here to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock."

"And I would like to suggest," said Mrs Murphy, the oldest and most discreet of the circle, "that we say nothing to the poor young woman until we have succeeded in getting her ticket."

"Certainly; we will say nothing that will raise false hopes," replied one other of the party, speaking for the rest.

"But, indeed, there shall be no false hopes. I mean to see this enterprise successfully through," exclaimed Mrs. Duncan. "However, I agree with our friend there, that nothing shall be said to Jennie until everything is settled," she added.

Then the little party broke up.

The next morning Mrs. Murphy interviewed the house physician of the hospital as to when Jennie Montgomery would be well enough to be discharged.

She was informed that if the young woman should continue to improve, she would be discharged about the twentieth of the month.

Mrs. Murphy met her friends at Mrs. Duncan's that afternoon, and reported the answer of the house physician.

"Therefore," concluded the old lady, "I think that her passage had better be taken for the first of October, to be on the safe side. She may leave the hospital on the twentieth, yet not be able to embark on a sea voyage. We can board her somewhere in the interval."

"She shall come here," said Mrs. Duncan, promptly. "And now I wish to tell you the result of my visit to the Vansitarts. Mrs. Vansitart was interested at once; so was

Miss Leegh. Mrs. Vansitart told me to take no trouble with the outfit, as she would like to provide the whole of it herself. Ah! my dear, what a blessing it is to have a great heart and a large fortune at the same time; to feel happiness and to confer it. Such is Mrs. Vansitart's lot. Miss Leegh gave five dollars toward the ticket; and the ticket is all we have to concern ourselves with now. Let us see how much we have toward it."

Each woman came forward and deposited on the table what she had collected.

Mrs. Duncan, the treasurer of the little fund, counted it up, and exclaimed:

"One hundred and ninety-five dollars! That will get her a first-class passage, and leave her a little fund for contingencies. After all, how easy it is to raise money for really charitable and meritorious cases."

The next day the ticket was bought for a first-cabin passage in the *Scorpio*, to sail October 1st, from New York for Liverpool.

Mrs. Duncan was deputed by the other donors to take the ticket and the money to Jennie Montgomery.

It was a pleasant task in which she delighted.

She found the young mother, not seated, as usual, in her resting-chair, but walking up and down the floor, with her baby in her arms.

"Well, my dear!" said the lady, seating herself in a common chair, "I am very glad to see you so well on your feet. How are you feeling?"

"Thank you, ma'am, I am feeling very well. I grow stronger every day. The doctors say that I may leave on next Thursday."

"That is just six days off. Have you thought of what you are going to do?"

"I think I shall go back to the house on Vevay Street, where I took a room when I first landed in the country. I was there but three days, but still I got a little acquainted with the landlady, and I should rather go there than go about looking for a room among perfect strangers. Besides, what should I do with baby while I should be hunting?"

"But suppose the room on Vevay Street should be let?"

"Oh, then I should leave the baby with the woman of the

house, who is kind, and should have to go hunting. But I won't suppose that until it happens."

"Well, then, if you get the room you wish, what will be your next step?"

"Oh, I shall have to take all I can spare from my little effects, and pawn them for money to live on while I am looking for work."

"And if you should not get the work?"

"Oh, ma'am, in that case—the Lord will provide."

Mrs. Duncan stooped and kissed the little, childish, pathetic face.

What a different face from that of the desperate woman who had defied the gentlemanly ruffian on that terrible night of the thirty-first of July, and driven him to attempt her life! It really seemed as if her infant had brought back to her the peace and good will, the simplicity and harmlessness of her own childhood.

"My little girl," said the woman, softly, "you will not go to Vevay Street. Nor will you go room-hunting anywhere. You will go home with me and stay until the first of October, and on that day you will sail for England to go home to your parents."

Jennie gazed at the speaker in childlike wonder, which grew higher at every spoken word until the last one was uttered, when she exclaimed:

"Home with you! And then—sail for England on the first of October, to go home to my parents! Oh, madam! I hear the words, but I don't understand them."

"Perhaps you will now! See! here is your ticket!" said Mrs. Duncan, placing the paper in her hand.

Jennie had been standing all this while with her baby held on one arm against her breast, with its little head on her shoulder.

Now she sank down in her resting-chair, and looked at the paper.

Then her face brightened with joy. She was a perfect child in her readiness to accept the favor, without a thought of humiliation to herself.

"A ticket for a passage on the *Scorpio!* I can go home! I can go home to the dear, peaceful parsonage, and to my dear parents! Oh, madam! What happiness! Oh, now I

thank you, beyond all words to tell, for this great happiness!" she fervently exclaimed.

"It is not my gift, dear child, but the gift of several friends who feel a warm interest in you."

"They are angels. And you are an angel!" cried Jennie, seizing the hand of the lady and pressing it to her heart and to her lips.

"There, dear. You—you overrate a simple act of neighborly kindness," said Mrs. Duncan, pressing the hand of the girl and then gently withdrawing her own.

"Tell me who they are, besides your dear self, that I may forever remember them in my prayers."

Mrs. Duncan put a paper in her hands.

"This is the subscription list, my dear, but it was never intended for your sight," she said.

"But you will let me keep it! Oh, you will let me keep it, so that I may always remember them, though they are too good ever to need my prayers."

To change the conversation, Mrs. Duncan said:

"If before the twentieth the doctors should consent for you to leave the hospital, I will bring a carriage to take you home with me, and you may, perhaps, have two clear weeks to recuperate before you sail for Liverpool."

"Words would be mockery! I wish there was some sure way of proving how grateful I am!" cried Jennie, almost ready to weep for joy and thankfulness.

"You are much too grateful, poor child! That is your only fault. Now good-by! I will see you again."

And she kissed Jennie and the baby, and left them.

Before the twentieth she got the doctor's leave to take her protégée away from the hospital; so, on the morning of the seventeenth, Jennie and her baby were delightfully domiciled in Mrs. Duncan's pretty house, on one of the uptown streets, overlooking Central Park.

The Duncan household consisted of husband and wife, with two half-grown sons and daughters.

The head of the family was now in Europe, buying goods for the winter trade of his firm, of which he was the "Co."

Mrs. Duncan and her daughters made a great pet of the baby, and took it, with its little mother, every day for an airing in the park. And Jennie was happier than she had ever been since she had left her father's house.

From under the wing of Mrs. Duncan's protection she wrote to her father announcing the birth of her infant girl, whom she should name for her mother, Esther, but whose baptism should be delayed until she could place it in her father's arms at the font before the altar of Medge parish church—a happiness she hoped to enjoy some time in the middle of the month of October, as her passage was engaged on the *Scorpio*, which was to sail for Liverpool on the first.

She wrote not one word about her husband or her trouble, but she enlarged on the kindness of her hostess and of the friends she had made in New York.

"Father will know that there is something wrong by my omission to speak of Kightly, and that will prepare him to hear the truth. Meantime he will know that I am with good friends," she said to herself as she sealed her letter.

At this time, at the Vansitart mansion, all the preparations for the grand wedding were completed. When the best caterer in the city has been charged with the responsibility of the breakfast, and has received *carte blanche* to provide without regard to cost; when artists and florists have taken similar orders for the decorations, and the finest band in the city has been engaged for the music, there is little or nothing left for the ladies of the family to look after. Even their toilets are more the affairs of the dressmakers and ladies' maids than of themselves.

Yet on the day week preceding the wedding not only was Mrs. Vansitart busy herself, but she kept Miss Leegh busy also; so that Mr. Randolph Hay could not get a glimpse of his bride-elect until evening.

She was looking very beautiful when he dropped in one night after dinner. She wore an ivory damassé satin, with blush roses on her bosom and in her hair.

"I have been here twice already to-day, without being able to see you," he said, taking his seat beside her on one of the sofas.

"I have been out all day with Mrs. Vansitart, doing—now, what do you think?" she archly inquired.

"By Jove! I could not guess if I were to try all night."

"Buying an outfit for a young mother and child, who are just discharged from the hospital, and are going to be sent home to Europe by kind friends."

"'Pon my life, very benevolent, I call it."

"Yes, I should think so. And the outfit Mrs. Vansitart has provided for the mother and child is no cheap affair, I assure you, but a much better one than could be afforded by middle-class people. Every article of clothing in dozens, and of fine material, if not of the finest."

"Very liberal, upon my soul!"

"And they have engaged for her no steerage or second-class berth, but a good stateroom amidships in the *Scorpio*, that sails for Liverpool on the first of October. And you know what a ship the *Scorpio* is. It is always your favorite steamer."

"Oh, yes! I have engaged our own passage in her. That is what I wished to tell you. But I was not so fortunate as your pauper—millionaires seldom are, odd as that sounds. I was not early enough. All the best staterooms had been engaged—one of the very best rooms, it seems, for your pauper. The steamers going to Europe at this season are not often full, the tide of travel being from the other side. If I had not been deceived by that circumstance, I should have been in time to get a choice stateroom. However, we have a fairly good one, large and commodious, though not amidships."

"Then we shall have this interesting young mother and child for fellow voyagers," said Miss Leegh.

"What a beautiful hand and arm you have, Lamia! But then you are all beauty—perfect beauty! What a startling sensation you will excite in London! But you must not make me jealous, my dear. I will not stand a rival, not even in the Royal British Basha, as we call him," said Gentleman Geff, gazing meditatively down on the superb woman his stolen wealth and rank had bought. He had scarcely heard her words about their fellow voyagers. He was not interested in this mother and babe—his own wife and his own child!—the only ones who had a legal claim upon him as husband and father, for all that he had told Jennie about her numerous predecessors in his evanescent affections, the first of whom had the only lawful right to him, according to his statement, was pure fiction.

Of course, he had not the faintest shade of suspicion that the protégées of Mrs. Vansitart and her friends were anything whatever to himself.

He believed Jennie and her unborn child to be moldering away in a so-called suicide's grave in Potter's Field. He never, willingly, gave them a thought.

So he was not in the least concerned about his fellow passengers. He did not even care to ask the young woman's name; nor did Miss Leegh happen to mention it, although she might have done so at any moment, as she would have told Jennie's piteous story as far as it was known to herself, which was, indeed, as far as it was known to anyone except to the young wife and her false husband.

She would have told this story if she had had the slightest encouragement to do so; but Gentleman Geff looked indifferent, not to say bored; and so Miss Leegh quietly dropped the subject.

Yet, if Gentleman Geff had known!

As it was, he went blindly on to his fate.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A MEMORABLE DAY IN MANY PLACES

The first of October, the day of the wedding and the day of the sailing, dawned bright and clear over land and sea.

In the Vansitart mansion, there was no hurry, no confusion, no excitement, such as too often attends wedding days in less fortunate houses. Money puts felt under the carpets and oil on the hinges, metaphorically as well as literally.

The splendid drawing-room had been decorated for the reception, and in the superb dining-room a sumptuous breakfast had been laid—all swiftly, smoothly, silently, as if by magic.

All was so still, peaceful and orderly, that no one would have imagined any event of importance about to take place, unless he had been given a view of the splendidly decorated drawing-room, or the sumptuous and festive dining-room.

Before the front of the house two elegant carriages were standing—one a capacious clarence, drawn by a pair of

fine, white Arabian horses; the other an open landau, drawn by an equally fine pair of bays.

These were waiting to take the bride's party to St. Basil's Church, where the bridegroom was to meet them, and where the marriage ceremony was to be performed.

At exactly half-past eleven o'clock the party assembled in the drawing-room.

And "first in honor and in place," was the fair bride, in a rich dress of white brocaded satin, with a train of white velvet, all elegantly trimmed with duchess lace and seed pearls. A wreath of orange blossoms, with a long, rich spray, crowned the beautiful golden-haired head, and an ample veil of duchess lace hung from it, and flowed down over the skirt and followed the long train. Necklace, bracelets and eardrops of diamonds—the gift of the bridegroom —lighted up this beautiful costume.

Six bridesmaids, selected from the young friends of the family, were tastefully dressed in white tulle, looped up with clusters of white rosebuds over white silk, and little white chip hats, with sprays of the same flowers on their heads.

Mrs. Vansitart wore a violet velvet gown, with old point lace and diamonds, and on her head a violet velvet turban, to match the dress.

"If we are all ready, we had better go to the carriages," said the elder lady.

And the party filed out of the house.

Mr. Peter Vansitart, in full dress, with a half-blown Maréchal Neil rose in his buttonhole, and the two little twelve and fourteen-year-old daughters of the house in pink dresses, were waiting on the porch.

Mr. Vansitart put his wife, the bride-elect and four bridesmaids into the ample clarence, where they sat without being crowded, three on a seat, facing each other. Then he put the two younger bridesmaids and his own two little daughters in the open landau, into which he followed them.

The boys of the family had already gone to the church in advance, and found convenient places.

As soon as all were seated the carriages set off.

A ten minutes' drive brought them to the church, before which the unusually large crowd of carriages announced the fullness of the attendance.

The bride's party left the carriages and entered the vestibule of the church, where they formed a procession, headed by Mr. Vansitart, with the bride on his arm, and followed by all the other members of the party, walking two and two.

As they passed up the central aisle of the crowded church the organ struck up a wedding march composed for the occasion.

The church, like the mansion, had been profusely decorated with the choicest flowers, and as the bride's procession went on, it passed under a succession of the richest floral arches.

As they neared the altar, where two clergymen stood in their white vestments, a door on the left was seen to open, and from it came another little procession—that of the bridegroom and his friends.

The two parties bowed to the officiating minister, then to each other, and then formed a semicircle, in the middle of which knelt the bridegroom and the bride before the altar.

The ceremony was commenced and concluded in the usual manner.

Mr. Peter Vansitart gave away the bride.

At the end of the rites the congregation—or company?—left their pews and came crowding around the newly married pair with warm congratulations. From these at last they escaped to the vestry room, where they had to sign the marriage register.

Then to the carriages that awaited them on the ouside.

Gentleman Geff, or Mr. Randolph Hay, led his bride to a very elegant barouche that stood waiting for them.

The other members of the family party resumed their seats in their own carriages, and then all drove back to the Vansitart mansion, where the wedding breakfast awaited them, and about a score of intimate friends, among whom was the officiating clergyman.

The breakfast passed off as all such affairs do, with speech making and health drinking, with compliments, flatteries, laughing and chaffing.

There was to be a large reception at two o'clock; but the favored few lingered so long at the table that the bridal party had scarcely time to reach the drawing-room and arrange themselves under the floral arch with the wedding

bells, to receive with propriety, before the early guests began to arrive.

Even a homely woman generally looks pretty in her wedding dress.

But "Mrs. Randolph Hay" was transcendently beautiful. Many a single man there envied "Mr. Randoph Hay," the proudest of bridegrooms.

A young sprig of diplomacy, who had been an attaché to more than one embassy, declared that this reminded him of a queen's drawing-room; only, he added, he had never seen queen or princess so royally, resplendently beautiful as Mrs. Randolph Hay!

And the wealth, beauty and fashion of the metropolis had come to do her honor.

The reception had been announced for from two till five.

It was a little after the last-mentioned hour, and the rooms were still full of guests, when "Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay," having, as they rightly supposed, received their last arrival, and the time being over, slipped away to change their wedding attire for traveling suits.

All their effects, their trunks, and even the costly presents that represented many thousands of dollars had been carefully packed in boxes, and had been sent on board the *Scorpio*.

Last of all, the bridal dress, veil and wreath that the bride had hastily put off, were delicately folded and laid in a cedar case that was to go in the carriage with them.

All the pair had now to do was to take leave of their friends and drive down to the pier and go on their steamer, which was advertised to sail at seven o'clock that afternoon.

When they were all ready to start a messenger went down to the drawing-room with an adroit whisper, here and there, to members of the household. And presently afterward they came up in small detachments, for it would not look well for all the family to leave the drawing-room at the same time.

Mr. and Mrs. Vansitart came up first, kissed the bride, warmly shook hands with the bridegroom, and blessed them both.

Then followed the children.

Lastly the bridesmaids.

It was not a sentimental parting with anyone.

Voyages across the Atlantic are nothing in these days and were nothing in those.

It was half-past five when the last good-by was spoken and the newly married pair entered their carriage, which in half an hour took them down to the pier where the *Scorpio* lay.

Pier and ship were crowded with people going to Europe, and other people seeing them off.

It was to avoid such a public exhibition that the bridal pair had begged to be allowed to speak their adieus at the Vansitart house.

"Take me at once to my stateroom, out of this horrid purgatory," said Lamia, with an expression of disgust and impatience, that rather marred the perfect charm of her serene beauty.

Gentleman Geff caught a distracted steward on the wing, and induced him to look at their ticket and find some one to show them to their quarters.

And there they shut themselves up to wait until the ship should be under way and the deck quiet.

Meanwhile, how fared it with our other expectant voyagers, Jennie Montgomery and her child?

The young woman had risen earlier than usual to greet the glorious October day that was to be the last of her stay in the clime where the glory of the autumn is unrivaled.

She washed and dressed her baby, as she had learned to do in the hospital and as she had done ever since she had come to Mrs. Duncan. Then she made her own toilet, and took her baby downstairs to the plain morning sitting-room usually occupied by Mrs. Duncan and her children.

She found them assembled, and all with some little last gift for the mother and babe, to be put in the carpetbag and worn on the voyage.

"Here is a large, soft, white shawl to wrap baby in when you take her on deck. My own work. I have been knitting it ever since you were here," said Julia, the ten-year-old daughter, dropping the gift, with a kiss, on Jennie's arm, and running away to escape thanks.

Then followed long woolen socks to be drawn over baby's limbs, and a hood for baby's head, and warm flannel wrappers for baby. All the children's last gifts were "for baby,"

A large, fur-lined cloak with sleeves and hood was the gift of "an anonymous friend." A sea suit of navy blue cloth, just finished, and brought home ready to put on, was Mrs. Duncan's last offering to Jennie.

"You overwhelm me with kindness—I cannot bear it!" exclaimed the girl, bursting into tears.

Mrs. Duncan put her arms around Jennie and kissed her.

"Why, my dear, why do you weep? Why, I love to get presents. I would much rather wear anything that was given me by a friend than anything I had bought myself. Not from any motive of avarice, oh, no! but because there is a soul of love in the thing given that makes itself felt, and gives happiness. For instance, when baby is wrapped in that white shawl that Julia knit for her, she is also wrapped in Julia's love. And everything from us that you wear wraps you in our love."

"I know! Oh! I know! And though I'm crying, yet I am glad—and so grateful! What will my dear father and mother say when I tell them of all you have done for me? How under the Divine Providence you have raised me from the dead and made life again durable and even happiness possible?" exclaimed Jennie, taking and fondly pressing the lady's hand to her heart, her lips and her forehead which she bowed upon it.

The sound of the breakfast bell was a welcome summons, and all went to the dining-room and sat down to the table, a housemaid relieving Jennie of the baby during the meal.

After breakfast, as they left the table and crossed the hall, Jennie saw an immense Saratoga trunk standing near the front door.

With childish curiosity she stooped to read the large painted letters of its address. It was:

MRS. KIGHTLY MONTGOMERY,
Care of the Rev. James Campbell,
Parsonage, Medge,
Hantz, England.

Per ship *Scorpio*.

From the inscription she raised her eyes, dilated with wonder, to the smiling face of Mrs. Duncan, who answered her mute inquiry:

"Where did it come from, do you mean? I will tell you,

dear. It came from a certain good friend of yours who wished in this manner to express her esteem."

"Tell me her name, that I may join it with yours in my prayers," pleaded Jennie.

"I cannot, dear. I am under a pledge not to speak it. But doubtless you will find a letter in the trunk from your unknown friend. But the trunk must not be opened until it reaches its destination. And it will have to be sent off to the steamer at once, for it will have to go in the hold and stay there until the ship reaches port. They don't allow huge trunks like this in the cabin or the staterooms. The little trunk that Jule and Nell have packed for you contains all that you will need in addition to the contents of your bags—for the voyage; these you can have in your stateroom."

While the group lingered, talking, in the front hall, the doorbell rang, and a parlormaid came and opened the door to admit the expressman who had been sent for and had come to take the baggage to the steamer.

When it was all taken out and dispatched, Mrs. Duncan said:

"And now, dear, as you have nothing at all to do to-day but to drive to the steamer at about six o'clock, and as you will not, after you sail this evening, see land again for eight or ten days, I think you and I and the girls will take a drive down the avenue, and then through Central Park, that you may take away with you a pleasant picture of trees and flowers."

"Oh, what can I say? You leave me nothing to say. I kiss your dear hands!" exclaimed Jennie, in a voice full of emotion, as she suited the action to the word.

"Then we'll go!" exclaimed Mrs. Duncan. And she rang the bell and ordered the carriage.

Half an hour later the whole party—consisting of Mrs. Duncan, Jule and Nell, Jennie and the baby—entered the carriage, which was driven down Broadway, and then up Fifth Avenue toward Central Park.

When near the park they passed a handsome double brownstone mansion, before which stood two elegant carriages, drawn by fine horses.

Jennie looked out of the window on her side, and nearest the house in question. She recognized the Vansitart man-

sion, before which at night she had met her would-be assassin. She changed color, sank back in her corner, and bent her head over her baby, lest Mrs. Duncan could detect her agitation and ask her questions which she could not answer.

The lady had seen her look out of the window, however, though she had not noticed her emotion, and so she hastened to indulge in a little pleasant gossip.

"Yes, my dear? There are two carriages, now, at half-past eleven, but at half-past three I guess there will be as many hundred. There is to be a wedding at St. Basil's Church at noon, and a grand wedding reception at the Vansitart mansion in the afternoon. Of course, you have read all this announced in the newspapers."

"No," breathed Jennie, in a scarcely audible tone, not daring to look up, yet longing to hear more, as she toyed with her baby's dress.

"No? But, oh, of course, I forgot! You hardly ever care to look at a newspaper. Well, my dear, it is a right pretty little romance in real life, that wedding! The bride, Miss Leegh—Miss Lamia Leegh—was the belle of the metropolis last spring, as she was the belle of Newport this last summer. She is a most beautiful blond woman of the Juno type, besides being a lady of noble birth, though of fallen fortunes, a protégée of Mrs. Vansitart's, who took her up and brought her out. Do you care to hear about this, Jennie, dear?" inquired Mrs. Duncan, seeing that the young woman never raised her eyes.

"Oh, yes, yes, I am—I am—listening," said Jennie, earnestly, though falteringly.

The lady kept her eyes fixed upon the girl, in some doubt, as she continued:

"The story of the bridegroom is even more romantic. His name is Randolph Hay——"

Jennie started, but quickly recovered herself.

"He was a Californian miner, born and bred in California, and living and working in the mines for years."

Jennie suddenly looked up with a new light in her eyes.

"All this time he knew that he was the grandson of a wealthy Yorkshire squire, but he never dreamed of ever becoming the heir, as there were two good lives between him and the estate; and, though his own father was dead, his

grandfather and uncle were living, and likely to live. Ah! you are interested now!"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly exclaimed Jennie.

"Well, one day, while working in the mines at Grizzly Gulch, or some such ghastly place, he saw in the newspaper that was brought every week by the expressman from the city, an advertisement calling for the next of kin, or heir-at-law, of the late Squire Hay, of Haymore. He knew that he himself was the next of kin, and the heir-at-law, for he had then heard of the death, unmarried, of the uncle who stood between himself and the inheritance. He lost no time in communicating with the advertising firm of attorneys, and following up his letter by a rapid journey from San Francisco, and a call on the lawyers. His claims, being sustained by unquestionable evidence, were admitted after the usual law's delays. He went to England to take possession of his estates, and returned to marry Miss Lamia Leegh. What do you think of that for a romance in real life?"

"Then the newsboy told me a willful falsehood—unless he himself had been misinformed," murmured Jennie, speaking more to herself than to her companions.

"What newsboy, my dear? What do you mean?" inquired the surprised lady.

Jennie recovered herself, and replied:

"Oh! a talkative little fellow that I met one day, who told me that the young lady, Miss Leegh, who lived with the Peter Vansitarts, was going to marry a 'great English swell,' whose name I afterward heard was Jeremiah Johnson!"

"What an idea! I do not believe that the fair, æsthetic, poetic Lamia would have married a millionaire, or a billionaire, or even a trillionaire, if his dreadful name had been Jeremiah Johnson."

"I see it was a mistake, or a fabrication," said Jennie, feeling infinitely relieved.

"And, by the way, my dear, I saw it announced in this morning's *Trumpeter* that the bridal pair will sail for Europe by the *Scorpio;* so you will have Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay for fellow passengers."

"Shall I? Oh! I shall like that!" exclaimed Jennie,

without a suspicion as to the identity of the bridegroom with her own recreant husband.

While they conversed the carriage turned into the park. They made the circuit of the beautiful grounds, and then returned home to lunch.

Afterward, about four o'clock, Mrs. Duncan said to her protégée:

"I would willingly keep you here, my dear child, to the very last minute, but the last two hours before a ship sails for Europe is so full of confusion on deck that there is no comfort in it. If we go on board three hours before the sailing we shall find comparative quiet. Now, I propose to take you down to the *Scorpio* at once, and take the girls with me. Then we can view your stateroom, and see if you will be comfortable; and we may stay there with you until the steamer shall be about to sail; then we will have to get off. How will you like that?"

"Oh, very much! There will be no haste—no fear of being too late. It will be safest," replied Jennie.

The carriage was at the door; Jennie was in her navy-blue sea suit; and the hand bags and baskets had been packed and put under the seats. Ten minutes later the party, consisting of Mrs. Duncan, her two little girls, Jennie and the baby, were on their way to the steamer.

Again they passed the Vansitart mansion, where the long line of carriages extended up and down the sides of the streets, and even into the cross streets.

"The grand wedding reception is at its height. I am glad I am not there! I did my duty, however. I sent a 'regret,' and a present. I suppose the bride and groom will not leave before six, and the ship sails at seven. It will be a 'close shave,' as the men say," remarked Mrs. Duncan, as they passed the house.

Jennie looked out at the crowd of carriages, but made no reply. Had she no suspicion now that the gay and happy bridegroom was Kightly Montgomery, alias Jeremiah Johnson, though she had been told by Mrs. Duncan, surely a better authority than the newsboy, that he was Mr. Randolph Hay, formerly of California?

Half an hour's fast drive brought them to the steamer. Neither pier nor ship was so crowded as they would be two hours later.

The whole party left the carriage, Mrs. Duncan told the coachman to wait, and then she led her little company across the gangplank.

The deck of an outward-bound steamer laying alongside her pier on the day of sailing is not a pleasant place to linger; so Mrs. Duncan led her party into the first cabin, showed Jennie's ticket, and asked to be shown into stateroom thirty-three.

It was one of the best rooms, as has been already said. It contained two berths, a narrow upper one and a broad lower one, and also a broad sofa. It might have accommodated three persons, yet Jennie had it all to herself.

She had never seen a first-class stateroom before, and so she admired this one with childish delight—its snowy berths, its luxurious sofa, upholstered to match, its elegant toilet arrangements of marble and silver.

"All the comforts and luxuries and elegancies of life, in a nutshell, dear Mrs. Duncan," she said.

"Yes, my dear, I think you will be well off here," replied the lady, as she seated herself on the sofa and signed for Jennie to sit down beside her.

The two little girls amused themselves by unpacking the bags and baskets, and arranging their contents in the deep drawers under the lower berth.

Crowds of people soon began to pour in upon the steamer. The Duncans remained in the stateroom with the young mother and child, until a quarter to seven, when the order was shouted out, for all persons who were not going on the voyage to return to the shore.

Then Mrs. Duncan and her girls took a tender leave of Jennie and the baby.

"Do you remain in your room here, my dear, until the ship's well under way. In that manner you will escape all the confusion on deck," said the lady, as she kissed her protégée a final good-by.

Jennie tried once more to speak her thanks, but her voice was choked with tears.

Mrs. Duncan dared not linger to kiss or to wipe them away, for the order:

"All ashore!" was peremptory. So she hurried, with her children, to the deck to join the crowd that was pouring across the gangplank.

Fifteen minutes later the farewell gun was fired, and the *Scorpio* stood out to sea, with more combustible agents in her than could be represented by material fire and gunpowder—for in the same cabin, unsuspected by either party, in room No. 11 was Gentleman Geff and his bride, and in room No. 33 Gentleman Geff's deserted wife and child. Sure to meet.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

RAN COMES

On the morning succeeding the sailing of the *Scorpio*, with such combustible elements on board as Gentleman Geff and his bride in stateroom No. 11, and his deserted wife and child in stateroom No. 33, Ran reached New York by an early train, just a few hours too late to come face to face with the impostor.

Ran brought with him a satchel full of documents, consisting of letters and certificates, and some corroborative evidence in the form of seal rings, lockets, miniatures and photographs, quite sufficient to establish his present identity as Randolph Hay, only son of the late Cuthbert Hay, grandson of the late Squire Hay, and heir-at-law of the Manor of Haymore.

Better even than all this, he brought in his company the venerable priest, Pedro de Leon, who had performed the ceremony of marriage between Cuthbert Hay and Maria Della Rosa, and a year later the rites of baptism of their only son, Randolph Hay.

The aged father had known the boy all his life, had met him every spring when Ran scrupulously went up to the city to "make his Easter," and now felt so much interested in the young fellow's fortunes that he sought and obtained leave of absence from the bishop of the diocese for the special purpose of accompanying him to New York, to be a witness in his case.

And best of all, perhaps, Ran bore upon his person a family peculiarity inherited by all the males of his race—that was on his left hand the germ of a little finger where a perfect little finger should have grown.

"It is well I have the family deformity to fall back on,

father, else it would take a mighty mountain of evidence to prove a little nigger as I am to be the descendant of a fair-haired Saxon race; it would be said that I had been changed in my cradle!" Ran had remarked to his venerable friend.

"But your Spanish mother, my son, would be sufficient to account for your dark complexion," gently suggested the priest.

"Nevertheless, I am glad I have got the stunted little finger to speak for me," laughed Ran.

Immediately on their arrival in New York, Ran took his aged friend to the nearest hotel, and engaged rooms and ordered breakfast.

After they had each taken a bath, changed the grimy traveling suit for fresh clothes, and partaken of breakfast, Ran left the priest to amuse himself in the reading room, and stepped out of the hotel to go and deliver his "credentials."

It was yet early in the day, at an excellent hour for making either a business or a social call, and he had passports to either. Yet he stopped on the sidewalk and hesitated.

He had a strong letter of recommendation from Col. Moseley to Walling & Walling, and he had a cordial note of presentation from Mrs. Moseley to her old schoolmate and bosom friend, Mrs. Samuel Walling. The time was propitious for delivering either. The first would take him to the attorneys' office downtown amid all the turmoil of traffic. The other would take him uptown to the elegant quiet of a drawing-room in the neighborhood of Central Park.

But he hesitated.

I don't know whether you have noticed it, but Ran Hay, though twenty-two years of age, was very much of a boy, and a very sensitive boy at that.

In his rough-and-tumble progress through life he had found all the men whom he had ever met—except three or four—rude, harsh and aggressive; whereas all the women he had ever seen—except, perhaps, one or two—kind, gentle and agreeable.

Therefore, now he rather shrank from going directly to the great firm of Walling & Walling, who were such awfully

big wigs, who had just successfully established his unknown rival in the possession of the Manor of Haymore, and had received for that a princely fee, and secured by that a wealthy client, and who might at the outset be inclined to resent his —Ran's—appearance, with his claims, as an unwarrantable impertinence, or as an attempt to swindle or to blackmail, and they might be disposed to make war upon him.

And though Ran knew perfectly well that his cause must triumph in the end, yet he shrank from the harshness and bitterness of a possible conflict.

So, after some consideration, he decided that he would let Col. Moseley's letter of introduction to Walling & Walling repose in his pocket for a little while, and go and deliver Mrs. Moseley's note of presentation to Mrs. Samuel Walling, and by that means prepare the way for a more acceptable interview with the great firm of which the last-mentioned lady's husband was the head.

To come to this decision was a great relief to Ran. He did not shrink—little border ruffian, as he called himself—from an interview with Mrs. Samuel Walling. She was the dear friend of lovely Mrs. Moseley; and the note he bore was a most cordial commendation of the bearer to the lady's friendly consideration.

When Ran had come to this conclusion he suddenly bethought himself of something—his personal appearance; too little regarded, too much neglected heretofore.

He re-entered the hotel, ran upstairs, entered his room, and took a look at himself in the glass.

Had Ran Hay been a vain youth he must have been gratified by the reflection there, for it was that of a face and form of rare, dark, rich Castilian beauty. As it was, he was but half satisfied; he passed his brush two or three times through his short, curled, black hair, which had not had time, since his head had been shaved clean, to grow to its usual length, and then he turned from the mirrow, muttering:

"I suppose I am all right; but I do look like a little nigger, for all that!"

Then he hurried downstairs and out on the sidewalk again. He inquired of a policeman what car or stage he should take to reach Mr. Samuel Walling's on Sixty-fourth

Street, and, having received instructions, walked a block, boarded a Fourth Avenue car, and started uptown.

That morning Mrs. Samuel Walling sat in her elegantly appointed boudoir, chatting with some intimate lady friends.

Augusta Walling was a stylish rather than a beautiful woman. Her manner was commanding rather than graceful. She was a tall and finely formed brunette, with an abundance of straight, black hair, without crimp or curl, parted evenly over a massive forehead, and plaited and wound in a natural crown for the top of her head, with a rich, brown complexion glowing into a dark crimson on cheeks and lips, and with fine, expressive features, the most remarkable among which were her strong black eyes.

Indeed, the first thing that would strike a stranger in her presence, would be those fine black eyes; the last thing he would remember of her would be those splendid black eyes; and that which any delinquent in her household would most fear to meet would be those terrible black eyes.

She was a power in her family, and some said she was a power in her husband's firm. But that was mere gossip.

She was never sick, never tired and never stooped to the careless ease of a robe or a wrapper. Although this was the forenoon of the day, and she was sitting in her morning room, in the midst of her own most intimate friends, she wore an uncompromising suit of maroon cashmere, with linen cuffs and collar—a suit that would have done to go shopping in.

She was seated in an armchair upholstered in dark-blue satin; and she was holding forth on the subject of the grand Hay-Leegh wedding at Vansitarts', to her group of cronies who were posed about her.

"Yes, I was there, although you did not see me. Why, even I did not see either of you. Who could see whom in such a jam? I declare that such occasions make me think that the human race is nothing more than a skin disease of the planet earth, and such crowds as that of yesterday unpleasant pustules."

"Oh, Mrs. Walling!" cried little Kitty Carben in horror. "But you went!"

"Oh, yes, I went. I didn't want to go, for I don't like the man or woman, and I would rather have been tortured

and humiliated in some other way, if it would have answered the same purpose; but you know Mr. Vansitart is a client of Walling & Walling—in point of fact, Sam has done all his law business for years; and besides that, old Peter recommends him everywhere, and throws a great deal of business into the firm; so it would not do to displease the Vansitarts; and I went, and I sent a wedding present in advance."

"But I thought Walling & Walling were quite overwhelmed and buried under tons of briefs," put in Mrs. Dalrymple, another of the callers.

"So they are—Sam especially; he is killing himself; but, my dear, did you ever, in all the days of your life, hear of a professional man who ever cried, 'Hold! Enough!' when business was pouring in? Walling & Walling do not, though the burden falls on Sam. Will takes better care of himself—goes off for a holiday, now and then, and leaves the business to Sam. If Sam says a word of objection, Will talks of 'brain exhaustion,' which is the joke of jokes; poor Will having no brain to exhaust."

"But tell me about the wedding present, dear Mrs. Walling. I didn't see yours, though, of course, there were so many that I could not examine a tenth of the lot," said little Kitty.

"You would not have been likely to see mine. It did not flash and sparkle like jewels, or glow in dull, smoldering colors like the India shawls."

"What sort of a present was it, then, dear Mrs. Walling?"

"To describe it in one word, it was a spiteful present, my little angel."

"A spiteful present! Oh, Mrs. Walling!"

"Yes, dear, just that. You see, little kitten, I didn't like the bride or bridegroom. Yet 'business' compelled me to go to the wedding; custom compelled me to send a gift; self-respect obliged me to make it an expensive one; and malice instigated me to make it one that, however costly, should be neither useful nor ornamental, nor in any way delightful to the newly married pair."

"Goodness gracious me alive! What did you give them, Mrs. Walling?"

"A complete set of the Grecian and the Roman classics in the original, bound in dull brown vellum, with dull

brown edged leaves. And neither of the pair can read a word of Greek or Latin. Fancy their feelings! Yet, yo" see, no one can criticise the gift."

"Oh, Mrs. Walling! But why don't you like the Hays?"

"Because I do not and cannot trust them."

"But the Vansitarts think so much of them!"

"Oh, yes, I know. Their eyes are 'holden,' I suppose. So does Will. He is quite infatuated with both of them. But, then, Will, you know, has not a ray of spiritual insight. Really and truly, now, not as much as my little Scotch terrier, Crab—named after Lance's dog. When the two called here last week, Crab utterly refused to become acquainted with either of them, although I myself introduced them to him as my very particular friends—which they were not, by a very long distance. My little dog knew I was lying. He as much as told me so. I was ashamed to look him in the face afterward. But as for Will, when he gets on the subject of Mr. Randolph Ha——"

An interruption came just here.

A servant entered with a letter and card on a salver.

The lady left her sentence unfinished, and took both.

She looked at the letter first, and her big, black eyes grew bigger and bigger every instant; for the letter was superscribed in the handwriting of her dearest friend, Mrs. Moseley, and was marked: "To present Mr. Randolph Hay."

Still staring at the letter, she lifted the card from her lap, and presently glanced at it.

MR. RANDOLPH HAY,
San Francisco.

"Am I dreaming, or—going crazy. Mr. Randolph Hay is a day out on his voyage to Europe; and even if he were here, he would not need a letter of introduction to me, and from my old friend in California. What does it mean, anyhow?" she inquired of herself; and instead of reading the letter, which would have explained everything, she sat gazing stupidly at it like one in a dream or a mesmeric trance, until Mrs. Dalrymple spoke to her.

"What is the matter, Augusta? You look surprised, distressed even. I hope there is no bad news," she said.

Mrs. Walling turnew slowly around toward the speaker, and put the letter in her hand, saying:

"There, Pauline! Read the superscription of that letter, will you? Read it aloud, so that my ears may either contradict or corroborate the evidence of my eyes."

Mrs. Dalrymple, wondering, took the letter, and read aloud:

"'Mrs. Samuel Walling. To present Mr. Randolph Hay;'" and then looked up in silent perplexity to the dazed face of her hostess.

"Yes, that is what I read, and what I cannot explain. Mr. Randolph Hay and his bride took leave of us all yesterday, as we all know, and sailed on the *Scorpio* for Liverpool," said Mrs. Walling, in answer to that silent inquiry.

"What is it all about?" inquired Kitty Carben, speaking for all her companions, who began to gather around Mrs. Walling's chair.

"It is more than I can tell you, girls," answered the lady.

"Suppose you read Mrs. Moseley's letter; that must certainly explain the mystery," suggested Mrs. Dalrymple, returning the missive.

Mrs. Walling took it in silence, opened it, examined it, and then read aloud:

"Fort Black Heath, September —, 18—.

"Dearest Augusta: Your delightful letter came this morning, and shall be answered by a very long one in a day or two.

"This is written only to engage your interest in the dear young friend who will bring it to you.

"He is Mr. Randolph Hay, grandson of the late Squire John Haywood Hay, and heir-at-law of the Manor of Haymore; and this, notwithstanding the existence of the Mr. 'Randolph Hay,' whom Walling & Walling have helped to put in possession of the estate.

"Our esteemed young friend brings a letter from Col. Moseley to Mr. Samuel Walling, fully explaining the solid ground on which his claim to Haymore is founded. He also brings abundant documentary proof. So I will not enter into particulars; but only add that I also am a very strong witness on his side. I was well acquainted with his maternal grandfather, Don Jose de la Rosa, and was very

intimate with his mother, Marie Annunciatta. I was her bridesmaid when she married Prof. Cuthbert Hay, second son of Squire Hay, of Haymore, and at that time holding the chair of languages in the College of St. Aloysius. I knew their only child, Randolph, from the hour of his birth to the time of his seventh year, when he lost his grandfather and then his mother by malignant fever, and was carried away from the city by his bereaved and broken-hearted father.

"I did not see Randolph Hay again for many years. When next I saw him, he was on a cot in the surgical ward of our fort hospital, where he had been brought a perfect stranger, almost fatally wounded, profoundly unconscious, and with nothing about him to give a clew to his identity.

"Yet I recognized him on sight—first by his wonderful likeness to his beautiful mother, and then by a slight deformity in the little finger on his left hand, which had been his from birth and which is said to be a sort of heirloom of the Hays.

"I, at least, had nothing new to learn when, on recovering his consciousness, he gave his name as Randolph Hay.

"He will tell you his story and show you his proofs. So I need write no more now but just this: that every day of our association with him during his long illness and tedious convalescence has confirmed and strengthened the good opinion we conceived of him from the first.

"I ask your kind offices for him, as I would ask them for one of my own children, and I shall be as grateful for attentions bestowed on him as for kindness shown myself.

"Wait for a long letter from me, and in the meantime, believe me, as ever, dearest Augusta, your devoted friend,

"DOLLY."

Mrs. Moseley's letter fell from the hand of the reader. Not a word had been spoken during its perusal, and at the close Augusta Walling and her friends still looked at each other in silent perplexity.

"Now, then! what do you think of that?" demanded Mrs. Walling, the first to break the silence.

No one answered promptly, so she continued:

"This discovery only confirms my opinion of the fellow who calls himself Randolph Hay," she said.

"Which fellow? There seem to be two fellows who call themselves Randolph Hay," said a flippant young woman who had not spoken before.

"The man who has just married the woman Leegh, of course," retorted Mrs. Walling, uncompromisingly. "No one can doubt that the young gentleman who comes here indorsed by Col. and Mrs. Moseley is the real 'Simon Pure.' They are likely to know what they are writing about! Now, my dears, I must go down and see Mr. Hay. He has been kept waiting long enough. Will you come with me to the drawing room?"

"Oh, no, dear Mrs. Walling! We are all going to the matinee of 'Richelieu.' Have a private box engaged, and really I am afraid we shall be late," said Mrs. Dalrymple, speaking for the rest and rising from her chair.

Mrs. Walling was rather relieved than otherwise to find that her callers were going just now; so she received their adieus very graciously.

We are all apt to form a mental image of an individual in whom we may be deeply interested, yet whom we have never seen either in person or in picture, nor ever heard described.

Mrs. Walling went downstairs with the preconceived idea that she should behold a tall, broad-shouldered, grand-looking man of the Castilian Spanish type.

She entered the drawing-room and found a slight, graceful, dark-haired, dark-eyed youth seemingly about eighteen, though really several years older. She was impressed by the grace with which he arose and came to meet her, and the deference with which he stood while she addressed him.

"Mr. Randolph Hay?" she said, holding out her hand.

"Yes, madam," he replied, taking her hand and bowing over it. And the lady was pleased with the sweetness of his voice.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Hay. You come from the dearest friend I have in the world, outside of my own family," she said.

Ran bowed deferentially.

"You left her well and happy?" she continued.

"Very well and very happy, madam."

"Of course, I knew it; but I am glad to hear you say it. Come now, Mr. Hay, let us sit down and have a good talk.

I am very much pleased to be acquainted with you, and feel deeply interested in your case," she continued, as she led the way to a group of luxurious armchairs near a bright little wood fire in an open fireplace, which was the effect of one of Augusta Walling's eccentricities.

She took one chair, and her visitor sank into another.

She noticed the ease and grace of his movement and attitude.

"Have you seen Mr. Walling and presented your letter?" she inquired.

"No, madam. I have but just reached the city this morning, and came straight from the hotel here," he answered.

Mrs. Walling looked at him, and immediately divined the reason why the young man had come first to her, so she answered, brightly:

"Thank you for giving me the preference, or the precedence. My friend writes that you will tell me your story and explain your case. If you are at leisure and are not too much fatigued by your journey, perhaps you had better do so now."

"I should be grateful for a hearing, madam, if it would not be trespassing on your time."

"My time is not valuable, young sir."

"Or boring you."

"Not at all. I told you that I was interested in your case. I assure you that I am," earnestly answered the lady.

So encouraged, Ran "opened his mouth and spake." With the unconscious egotism of youth, he told his story from the beginning to that hour, when he sat by Mrs. Walling's fireside.

She not only listened attentively, but spurred him on by occasional comments, and even questions, until he had told her all he had to tell.

She remained silent and thoughtful for a few moments, and then she said:

"Do you know that I suspect that man, Delamere, of having robbed you?"

"Oh, madam!" he exclaimed, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, I do. When a stranger appears in such a place as a mining camp, and earns for himself, merely by his appearance, the nickname of Gentleman Geff, or Gentleman Anybody, you may set him down as an adventurer; and

when that same 'gentleman' offers to bear you company in a fatiguing tramp of sixty or eighty miles through the wilderness, you having valuable property about your person, you may set him down as a dangerous adventurer; and when he tramps with you until the dead of night, when you find yourself in a narrow path through the deep forest, you walking a little ahead of him; and when you are suddenly shot by an invisible hand and robbed—you may set him down as a highway robber and a would-be murderer."

"Oh, my dear madam! But Delamere's body was afterward found, and it was supposed that he had been murdered by the same unknown party of marauders who robbed me and left me for dead."

"If your 'Gentleman Geff' were murdered at all, it was after he had shot and despoiled you. But the probability is that he was not. The skeleton found and supposed to be his from mere circumstantial evidence is no positive proof of his death. My private opinion is that Gentleman Geff is alive and is now on his way to Europe," said the lady, with peculiar earnestness.

"Oh, madam! madam! You give life to a suspicion that has lain dormant in my own mind ever since I recovered consciousness in the hospital of the fort; a suspicion that I have never breathed to anyone; a suspicion that I have constantly suppressed as being cruelly unjust to a fellow man. I am very unhappy in entertaining it," said Ran, with a profound sigh.

"Now I will speak still more plainly. I believe that when, upon the night before your tramp through the woods, you told this stranger your story, and explained the object of your journey, and capped the climax of your imprudence by saying that it would take a great deal of documentary proof, supported by personal testimony, to establish the identity of 'a little darky' like yoursef as the next of kin to the fair-haired race of Hays and heir-at-law of Haymore, and remarked that Delamere would be a much more likely claimant, by virtue of his tall, fair person, that jest nearly cost you your life, for I think that at that moment the devil entered into Gentleman Geff, and instigated him to rob you of your life, your documents and your inheritance."

"Oh, my dear lady; that was the occasional, half-recog-

nized suspicion that I always repelled as a suggestion of the evil one," breathed Ran, covering his face with his hands.

"But when you heard that there was another Randolph Hay, who had stepped into your inheritance?"

"I never connected that fact with the existence of Gentleman Geff, for, you see, Randolph is an old family name, and I thought this man was some relative whose claim had been admitted, in default of nearer and better ones. Besides, I believed that the body of Delamere lay in the cemetery of the fort."

"Yet at the bottom of all your knowledge of facts, or supposed facts, lay this troublesome, irrepressible suspicion?"

"Yes, madam," said Ran, slowly and thoughtfully. "But—the—what shall I call it?—the doubt, the feeling, the impression, was scarcely perceptible as a suspicion, for I would not let it rise to that. I always repressed it."

"Well, but now that you have recognized this suspicion—in which I very largely share—the very best thing we can do at present is to verify or disprove it," said Mrs. Walling.

"But how?" inquired the young man.

"Excuse me," replied the lady, as she arose and went to a little front room on the opposite side of the entrance hall, that was used by her husband as his home office.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DISCOVERY

Mrs. Walling presently reappeared, bringing in her hands a book. She sat down and opened it, saying:

"Mr. Walling has a set of photographic albums, which he calls his clients' gallery, as they are devoted to the collection of pictures of those who have intrusted their law business to him. He gets a new volume every year. This is the last one. Now I want you to take it and look it over."

Ran took the book, and began to turn the leaves.

Mrs. Walling watched him.

Suddenly he started, stared until his black eyes showed a rim of white all around the iris, and then grew very pale.

"Well? What is the matter? Do you see any face there that you ever saw before?" inquired Mrs. Walling.

"Whose is this picture?" he suddenly demanded, laying his finger on one of the last photographs that had been slipped into the book.

"Who do you suppose it to be?" demanded the lady, in her turn.

Ran Hay looked bloodless and breathless as the dying when he gasped forth:

"Gentleman Geff! Mr. Geoffrey Delamere!"

"Alias Mr. Randolph Hay, of Haymore! The man who shot you down from behind—who left you for dead, to be devoured by the wolves of the wilderness! The man who robbed you of all your documents, and then came on here, and went to England, and through those documents robbed you of your inheritance! The man who, yesterday noon, married the most elegant woman in society, and who, yesterday afternoon, sailed with her for Europe on their wedding tour! I wonder what my husband will say when he finds it out!"

Ran did not answer. After his first exclamation he sat with his beautiful head bowed upon his hands in shame and grief, as if it had been himself instead of his trusted comrade who had been detected in this black crime, this treachery, this cruelty.

"I wonder that your friends at the fort never suspected the truth," remarked Mrs. Walling.

Ran sighed, but did not reply.

"But, then, I suppose they got your story piecemeal, as you could tell it in your illness—a little now and a little more then—and they never put it together and looked at it as a whole, as I did. And, then, they had only heard of the second Mr. Randolph Hay just before you left them," said the lady, thoughtfully.

"Yes," sighed Ran, speaking again, but without raising his bowed head. "Yes; and I put them off the track of suspicion by telling them that Randolph was a frequent name in the Hay pedigree. And then there was the supposed body of Delamere buried in the fort cemetery."

"Do not distress yourself so, my young friend. There is no doubt you will dispossess the impostor, and get your inheritance without much trouble," said Mrs. Walling, kindly.

"It is not that," said Ran, with another profound sigh; "but I did hope the claimant might have been the son of my father's youngest brother, and that he had put in an appearance in good faith, being ignorant of my existence, and my prior claim. If such had really been the case, I should not have dispossessed my cousin entirely, but would have divided my grandfather's estate with him; for I never did recognize the justice of the law of primogeniture. Such division would have been a pleasant duty, Mrs. Walling. But instead of that, I have to dispossess an imposter, and expose him to the vengeance of the law—a most revolting work!"

As he spoke a bell rang.

Mrs. Walling was glad of the interruption.

"That is for lunch. Come in with me, Mr. Hay, and take a glass of wine and a chop, and you will feel better," said the lady, rising.

Ran bowed, thanked her, arose, and followed her to the dining-room.

"I am alone, you see," she said, as she motioned the waiter to place a chair for the guest. "Mr. Walling takes his lunch downtown. Our only son is at Harvard, and our only daughter at Vassar. I am very glad of company, Mr. Hay."

They sat down to the "chop," which meant various other edibles and delicacies.

During luncheon she said:

"I want you to come and dine with us this evening. Mr. Walling will be home then, and you will have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with him socially before entering into business, which will be so much more pleasant, you know."

"Thank you, dear madam, I should be most happy to avail myself of your kind invitation but for my traveling companion and friend, the Rev. Mr. de Leon, who will expect me to dine with him," replied Ran.

"Bring him with you! Bless you, we entertain clergy-

men of all denominations here. We shall be very glad to see your friend with you," replied Mrs. Walling.

Again Ran Hay bowed his thanks.

When luncheon was over he took leave of his hostess, with the renewed promise to return in the evening and bring Father Pedro de Leon with him to dinner.

Ran knew that he could promise this with perfect safety, for his old friend was one of the most amiable of men, and would do any reasonable thing to please any one.

Mr. Walling came home earlier than usual that afternoon.

When he had taken off his business coat and stretched himself upon a broad, comfortable lounge in the sitting-room to take an hour's rest before dressing for the evening, Mrs. Walling came in, drew a low chair to the side of his couch, sat down and opened upon him in this sort:

"Well, Sam Walling! a nice mess you have made of it!"

"What's the matter now?" inquired the weary lawyer, with a yawn. "I am sure I don't know! Didn't Smith & Bellows send the right samples for the carpet? I stopped on my way down and told them to send half a dozen of the very best, dark, with price-list."

"Oh, bother the carpet! It is not about that!"

"What on earth is it about, then? I am certain you gave me no other commission."

"It is not about a commission, either! It is a great deal worse than that! That failing to execute my commissions is an almost daily occurrence with you, Sam! I am used to it and forgive you. But this——"

"Well, what in thunder have I done, or omitted to do? Tell me quick, and let's have it over! I want to go to sleep!"

"I don't think you'll go to sleep this afternoon, Sam! I don't think my news will compose you!" said the lady, with so much gravity that her husband took his hands from over his head, turned around on his side and stared at her.

"You ask me what you have done—now listen——"

"I'm listening."

"You put an impostor, an adventurer, a confidence man,

a sharper, a gambler, a blackleg, a swindler—— Are you listening, Sam?"

"By Jove I should think I was;"

"A thief, a highway robber, a midnight assassin—— Do you hear me?"

"Great Sphinx! I should think I did!"

"Into possession of the Haymore Manor!"

The lawyer sprang up like a jumping-jack and sat staring at her.

But she was silent, marking the effect of her words and waiting for him to speak, which at length he did:

"What, in Heaven's name, do you mean, Augusta?"

"I mean every word which I have said! And every word is true! The Randolph Hay whom you and your correspondents in London have bowed and scraped into the Haymore estate, is no more Randolph Hay, squire of Haymore, than he is Albert Edward, Prince of Wales!"

"In the devil's name, who is he, then? And what on earth should you know about it?" demanded the astounded lawyer.

"One question at a time! 'Who is he?' A villain, with a score of aliases—an assassin, who shot down the real Randolph Hay, in the depths of a Western wilderness, robbed him of all his money and documents, left his body to be devoured by wolves who would conceal his crime, and came on here with the name and claim and papers of his victim to take possession of the Haymore estate, believeing himself to be forever safe from detection!"

"Augusta Walling, what raving is this?"

"No raving; wait, listen. The ways of retributive justice are strange! The victim did not become the prey of wild beasts. A hunter found the body, believed it to be dead, but discovered faint signs of life, conveyed it to the nearest post, where surgical aid was given. There the wounded man was recognized by the colonel's wife, my dear friend Dolly Moseley, as Randolph Hay, whom she had known from his infancy, as she had previously known his parents and grandparents."

"How have these facts—if they are facts—come to your knowledge?"

"By the appearance of Mr. Randolph Hay, himself, in person, bearing a letter of introduction from Mrs. Moseley

to me, which he presented this morning. He also brings one from Col. Moseley to your firm. He is also accompanied by the Mexican priest who married his parents, baptized himself, and subsequently buried his father and his mother. He has plenty of other proofs, overwhelming, incontestable proofs of his identity as the real Randolph Hay, next of kin to the deceased squire, and heir-at-law of Haymore. Now, then, Sam Walling! What do you think of this? Haven't you made a mess of it? And—do you feel like going to sleep now?"

The lawyer answered never a word. He had one hand on his head, clutching his iron-gray hair.

"Don't do that! Don't! People might say I did it. Tell me what you think of all this?" demanded his wife.

"It is astounding if true!" said the amazed lawyer.

"'If true!' Sam Walling, you know it is true! You know it! But, of course, if you mean to stand by the villain, instead of taking the side of justice, you are bound not to admit the truth."

"When will this young man present his letter to us?" demanded Mr. Walling, passing over his wife's sarcasm.

"To-morrow, I suppose."

"You say he called on you this morning to present his letter to you?"

"Yes."

"What is he like?"

"You shall judge for yourself. I have invited him and his friend, the clergyman, to dine with us, informally, this evening. I thought by doing so to give you an opportunity of studying the young man from a social point of view before going to business with him to-morrow."

"That was well thought of. I am glad you did it."

"And now, Sam, it is really time to dress for dinner—unless, dear, you would like to lie down again, turn your face to the wall and go to sleep?"

"Go to the Old Scratch! You know very well that you have 'murdered sleep' more effectually than did conscience from the brain of Duncan's assassin," replied Sam Walling, as he arose from his sofa, and passed on to his dressing-room.

Half an hour later the husband and the wife met in the drawing-room to await the arrival of their guests.

And ten minutes after, the Rev. Mr. de Leon and Mr. Randolph Hay were announced.

It was Mrs. Walling who went forward to receive the guests.

Mr. Hay made his bow to the hostess, who said she was glad to see him again, and then he presented his friend.

"The Rev. Mr. de Leon."

Mrs. Walling offered her hand to the priest, and said that she thanked him very much for coming, and was very glad to see him.

Then she conducted the two guests to Mr. Walling, who stood, smiling, with his back to the fireplace, and presented them—age before beauty.

"The Rev. Mr. de Leon—Mr. Walling."

Priest and lawyer bowed and shook hands.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. de Leon."

"I thank you, sir. You are very kind."

"Mr. Randolph Hay—Mr. Walling."

Ran and the lawyer bowed and shook hands.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Hay."

"Very much pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Walling.."

Then they sat down for a little while, and talked—idiotically as people do talk under like circumstances, of the weather, in its relations to the present day, to yesterday, to this time last year, etc., until Mr. Walling said:

"You are lately from California?"

"Yes, sir," from both guests.

That started new subjects—California, climate, soil, products, mines.

In the midst of this discussion Mrs. Walling found an opportunity of saying, aside, to Ran:

"No hint of business to-night, my dear young friend."

And Ran to reply:

"Of course not, madam; not in the midst of a busy lawyer's social relaxation."

"I have told Mr. Walling all about you. He is well prepared to receive your letter of introduction from Col. Moseley to-morrow."

"I thank you, madam."

"No, sir. It remains to be seen how much, or how little real benefit to mankind through the political economy of

the nations, this discovery of gold will eventually prove," the priest was saying to the lawyer, when dinner was announced.

The old priest then offered his arm to the hostess, and all went into the dining-room, and took their places at the round table. There were only four.

During dinner, the host, without appearing to do so, watched his guests keenly; but without discovering any sign that could point them out as men capable of conspiracy. They passed the ordeal of the astute lawyer's scrutiny without injury.

It had not really been so in the case of Gentleman Geff. Althought he had presented documents enough and suborned testimony enough to compel the law to place him in possession of Haymore, there had been all through in Mr. Samuel Walling's mind a deep, latent, unexpressed doubt, suspicion, almost conviction, that his claims had been fraudulent, though admitted by law.

Not on any account would Mr. Walling have confessed this doubt even to his most intimate friend, for, indeed, he had neither reason nor evidence to justify him.

When dinner was over and the small company adjourned to the drawing-room, Ran found an opportunity of saying to his hostess:

"I had an uncle, a younger brother of my father's, who married and came to New York to live and who died here, as I heard, and whose son I supposed this false claimant to be, before I discovered him to be—who he is. About my uncle I scarcely know anything. I heard that he had died very poor. I would like to discover his family if he left any."

"The best way to do that, my dear young friend, would be to advertise in the personal column of the *Trumpeter*," said Mrs. Walling.

After a very pleasant evening with the Wallings, the two guests bade good-evening and went away.

CHAPTER XL

A SURPRISE FOR CLEVE AND PALMA

It was dusk when our young pair reached the threshold of their new home.

It was a double, seven-story apartment house at Yorkville. It stood on a corner and opened upon both streets.

Cleve gave his right arm to Palma, while in his left hand he carried a heavy valise, and led her up the steps and into a circular hall or office, where the janitor was in attendance. Mrs. Pole followed with a heavy bag in each hand. Stuart put down his valise and drew a card from his pocket, which he handed to the Cereberus.

"Yes, sir, 'Mr. Stuart.' Fifth floor, right-hand passage, rear rooms suite," mumbled the man. And then he touched a bell that summoned the elevator up from its momentary repose in the regions below.

"Fifth floor!" was the order given by Cereberus to the elevator boy as our party entered the machine.

They happened to be the only passengers, so there was no stopping on the way, and in a few seconds they were "landed" on a long, narrow passage that seemed to run from front to back, and to be crossed by several other passages, all dimly lighted with gas turned low.

"Now, then," said Stuart, when the elevator had left them, "let us see. First turning to the right. Here we are."

And he led his party down a cross passage straight to a door at its extremity.

That door, after the manner of some apartment houses, led into a short, narrow passage with two doors on each side, and a window with a fire-escape at the end.

"This is our private dwelling—our house. This door through which we have just passed is our street door. This passage is our hall. These two doors on the right lead into our communicating parlor and bedroom. The two opposite doors on the left lead into the communicating kitchen and—housekeeper's bedroom," said Stuart. He hated to say "servant's" in the hearing of Mrs. Pole.

"Now, you see, Poley dear, you have more than half the 'house' to yourself," added Palma.

"Not quite," explained her better informed husband, "for the rooms on the right are not so large as those on the left."

"Well, let us look at them, and begin with the kitchen as really the most important of the suite," suggested Palma.

"Now, Mrs. Pole," said Stuart, with a smile, and with

his hand on the knob of the kitchen door, "you must not be jealous, but I have got a woman in there. Only for the day, Mrs. Pole, to give us a house-warming and a welcome in the way of a comfortable tea, and so forth. She will leave this evening, and not return except on Mondays for the family wash."

Mrs. Pole did not reply. She was jealous of any one else doing anything for the young pair.

"Come, Poley, dear, don't be cross—on the very first evening we get home, too," pleaded Palma, laughing and coaxing.

"Oh, I'm not cross, child. Nor likewise jealous, Mr. Stuart. But there wasn't no use in you getting in anybody else to get the tea for you. I was aquil to getting it, while you was taking off your things, ma'am," said Mrs. Pole, still with an offended air.

"Come, Poley! Please let us off this one time, and we won't do so—no, never no more!" said Palma, putting her fists into her eyes and pretending to cry

"Just hear to the child! Why, it is only for your own sakes that I spoke at all. To save you two young creatures useless expense. There! I won't say another word, and I will even be civil to the strange woman."

Peace being proclaimed, Stuart opened the door, and they passed into the kitchen with exclamations of surprise and admiration. Neither the young nor the old woman had ever seen or imagined the like of a small, neat, "cabinet-finshed" kitchen, where a princess of the blood might play at cooking, without the need of making a litter or soiling her dress.

A clean, fresh-looking young woman, in a dark-blue stuff dress, and white apron and bib, presided over the little shining range, on which a bright copper kettle was boiling.

She smiled a silent welcome, and stood aside to make room for the newcomers.

"Is it not charming, Poley? Did you ever see anything so exquisitely clean, compact and well ordered?" demanded Palma, in approbation.

"Never!" replied Mrs. Pole. "Why, it is just perfection! Cleanliness and convenience itself! One won't have to wear her limbs out trotting round here. Everything is

in hand's reach, and one needn't make a muss unless one wants to do it."

From the kitchen they passed to the housekeeper's bedroom—a small chamber, with a white bed, white window curtains, and a strip of carpet on the dark, polished floor, and a black walnut bureau, wardrobe and rocking-chair.

Mrs. Pole expressed herself satisfied with this.

Then they crossed the narrow passage to examine the two rooms on the other side—the communicating drawing-room and sleeping chamber.

The little drawing-room elegantly fitted up, "cabinet finished," and upholstered in black walnut and garnet velvet, and the sleeping apartment in maple wood, amber satin and white lace.

Every article for comfort and luxury was present in the small but elegant suite.

Palma was charmed, delighted. And Cleve was happy in her happiness.

"And now you will not regret the woods and hills of Westchester that we have left behind us, dear?" he smilingly inquired.

"No, no! Not for the coming winter. This is delicious —for a change," she replied.

The temporary servant came in to lay the cloth for tea, and then Stuart and Palma passed into their chamber to lay off their traveling suits and put on lighter garments for the evening.

In half an hour they returned to the little dining-room, where they found a dainty tea table ready and waiting for them to sit down.

"Are you tired, dear?" inquired Cleve Stuart, after tea was over, the service removed, the servant paid and dismissed, and when the young pair were seated at the center table, looking over the latest magazines, which Cleve had been careful to provide.

"Tired? No, not in the least. A pleasant steamboat trip down the river is not tiresome, you know. Why do you ask? I do not look tired, do I?"

"Not at all," he answered, promptly. "I never saw you look fresher, brighter. I thought, as we had been out of town so long, sequestered in the woods, that, if you were not tired, you might like to go somewhere."

"Somewhere?" echoed Palma, in bewilderment, thinking, perhaps, of some journey north, east, south or west.

"To some of the attractive evening amusements. Nillson will sing at the Academy of Music; Booth will act at Niblo's Gardens; Madame Janauschek at——"

"Cleve, where do you want to go, dear?" inquired Palma, looking at him wistfully.

"I really do not care. I wish to leave the choice to you," he answered.

"You really and truly do not care which of these celebrities you may go to see?" she inquired incisively.

"No; I really do not."

"Then it is certain that you do not care to go to either. You are *blasé*, Cleve, so far as all these go. And I am indifferent just because I am so comfortable just where I am. I do not want to go to see any celebrity to-night any more than you do. But if there be any other place you would like to go to, any—gentleman's place, you know—any club or lodge—please go, Cleve. And never think that I shall believe you neglect me. Oh, no, indeed! Or that I shall be lonesome. I shall have enough to occupy me, helping Poley to unpack the trunks and put away our wardrobe and other effects."

"I have no club and no lodge, dear; nor, indeed, do I wish to stir out to-night. Where are the 'Idyls of the King'? We will finish Elaine," said Stuart, and he went in search of the book that he and Palma had begun to read at Lull's.

So quietly passed the evening. And quietly passed the succeeding days of the young couple in their new home.

The money raised on the watch and the seal ring would support them for some months to come.

In the meantime, Stuart purchased some elementary law books and commenced the study of his chosen profession, yet he never relaxed his efforts to obtain employment.

Palma spent her time in what she humorously called "rag-picking," by which she meant looking over, turning, piecing, darning and generally repairing her own and her husband's wardrobe, both of which began to show visible signs of wear and tear.

Mrs. Pole did all the little housework, except the laundering, which was given out to Adeline Watson, the young

woman who had waited on the little party on the evening they first took possession of their flat.

On Sundays, mornings and afternoons, and on Thursday evenings, Cleve escorted his young wife to church. On other evenings, he sometimes took her to a concert or a lecture, or, to what she liked best of all, to a dramatic reading by some professional elocutionist.

So serenely passed their days and nights, without any event to disturb their peace, until near the first of October, when there came a change in the character of a series of disquieting incidents, not at all, however, of a distressing nature.

First, there were the long, sensational and descriptive reports of the ceremony and festivities, at church and mansion, of Mr. Randolph Hay and Miss Lamia Leegh.

These were very trying to Cleve Stuart. Well as he knew, and deeply as he despised, the beautiful adventuress who had held him in her toils so long, and had tempted him to the evil deed that he was now atoning by the devotion of his life—truly as he loved the pure spirit that was now his wife, yet—yet—he could not hear or see the name of Lamia Leegh without pain, could not read of her marriage without anguish. He hated and scorned himself for this. He wondered how the fiend still held her clutch upon his heart-strings, and why he had not strength to wrench it off. He recognized this condition as one of mental or moral disease, or insanity. He was no longer hallucinated by the woman, yet when all the city was still ringing with the talk of their wedding pomps and vanities, he felt, in his anguish, as another Laocoon in the crushing coils of the serpents. He experienced a relief as if from impending suffocation when he heard that the bridal pair had sailed for Europe! The city was delivered from them. The hemisphere would soon be rid of them—thank Heaven! he thought.

As for Palma, she, too, read of this grand wedding, with all a young woman's lively interest in such affairs. And in her innocence and ignorance of Stuart's painful interest in the subject, she could talk of nothing else, for a while, especially as the bridegroom was her own cousin, the only living relative she had in this world, as she repeatedly reminded her husband.

"And to think of my own cousin, my dear father's broth-

er's only son, being so near us, and knowing nothing about us, Cleve! Why, we ought to have been invited to the wedding, Cleve! Yes, and, of course, we should have been, if the bridegroom had known of our existence—so near him, too! Indeed, Cleve, I cannot help feeling as if we should have made ourselves known to my only relative," persisted Palma, plaintively.

"And so we should, dear, but for his wife. I could not permit you to know his wife, Palma," gravely replied Stuart.

"Ah, yes! I remember you told me, when we first heard of the engagement, that she was not a good woman. What a pity for my dear cousin! If you could only have warned him, Cleve!" sighed Palma.

"Men do not take such warnings, my dear; do not profit by them. They consider them impertinences and resent them," replied Stuart.

"Ah, well! I am very sorry for him! The Hays were always good and true, whatever else they were. I have heard my father say so; and, perhaps, Randolph may make a good woman of Lamia yet," she said.

Cleve Stuart laughed so harshly and cynically that Palma looked up at him in surprise.

"Let us talk of something else, dear," he said, in a gentler tone.

And the conversation changed.

No more allusion was made by either Cleve or Palma to the recent splendid wedding. The papers made no further mention of it. Society ceased to talk of it.

There was a new sensation. The most celebrated and popular of all modern English authors arrived in the city, and began a course of lectures which drew crowded houses every night, and filled columns of the newspapers every morning. He was being talked about, written about, fêted, interviewed, reported and lionized within an inch of his life, and all foregone social sensations were last winter's snows.

Stuart took Palma to one of the lectures that she might see the lion of the day and be able ever afterward to say that she had seen him.

Palma gazed and listened with adoring soul, and came home feeling enriched and happy in the possession of such

a treasure as that experience in the storehouse of her memory.

It was on the morning after this lecture that Cleve and Palma were sitting in their bright little parlor waiting for breakfast to be brought in.

Palma was clipping and stitching a new edge on a frayed collar.

Cleve was looking over the *Trumpeter,* and reading out such items of news as he thought might interest his wife, when suddenly he exclaimed:

"Oh! see here! What is this?"

"What is what?" demanded Palma, looking up from her work.

"Listen! but first let me ask—Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay sailed for Europe, four days ago, did they not?" he inquired.

"Why, of course, they did! Why do you ask such a strange question, Cleve?" she exclaimed, pausing, with her needle in her fingers, and gazing at him in much surprise and curiosity.

"And Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay are about halfway across the ocean by this time, are they not?" he continued, without heeding her question.

"Why, of course, I suppose they are, unless——"

"Yes, unless their ship is wrecked."

"And we have heard of no wreck."

"No."

"At least, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hay are not on this side of the ocean."

"No, of course not. What do you mean, Cleve, dear?"

"What does this mean, rather? Listen!" said Stuart.

And he took up the *Trumpeter,* turned to the first column of the first page, and read the following paragraph:

"James Jordan Hay—Any information concerning the children of the late James Jordan Hay, who died in this city, about twelve years ago, will be thankfully received and liberally rewarded by their cousin, Randolph Hay, at the Stardash Hotel."

"There, then! What do you think of that?" demanded Stuart, looking from the paper to the face of his wife.

"I—I—I don't think at all! I can't think! I'm reduced to a state of mental imbecility!" replied Palma, gazing back at him.

"I'll tell you what I think," said a voice near them.

Both looked up and saw Mrs. Pole standing before them with the breakfast tray in her hands.

"Oh, Poley, you there! And have you heard?" inquired Palma.

"The 'vartisement? Every word of it!" replied Mrs. Pole, setting the tray down on the table, and beginning to take from it and to arrange the coffeepot, muffins, cutlets and other edibles on the cloth.

"And what do you say you think, Poley?" demanded Palma, while Cleve Stuart sat holding the paper in his hand, looking at them.

"I think if I was Mr. Stuart there, I would not stop here wondering and speckerlating; but just as soon as I had eat my breakfast I would take myself right off to that Stardash Hotel, and ask to see that same Mr. Randolph Hay, and tell him as you have married the only child of the late Capt. Hay. That's just what I think I would do," said the woman, positively.

"You are quite right, Mrs. Pole, and, of course, I shall go to the Stardash immediately after breakfast."

"Well, now, then, sit up, both of you, and eat it, or the coffee will be cold," said Mrs. Pole, as she placed two chairs at the table.

Cleve and Palma left their easy-rockers and took their seats at the board; yet their thoughts were more upon the mysterious advertisement than upon the good things of the table.

"Of course, it must be some other Randolph Hay, though the name is not a common one," said Cleve.

"But he is my cousin—or so the advertisement runs," observed Palma.

"Yes. Well, it is a riddle which I feel very anxious to solve," commented Cleve.

And he hurried through his breakfast that he might hasten away to unravel the mystery.

"Hurry back as soon as possible, Cleve; and if the advertiser is our cousin, bring him with you," said Palma, as she stood at the door of the elevator to see her husband off.

"Certainly, if practicable, I will bring him back with me," he replied, as he entered the machine and descended out of sight.

Palma returned to the little drawing-room, which Mrs. Pole had already put to rights, and she sat down to her sewing with her mind busy on the conundrum of two Randolph Hays.

"Poley," she said to the housekeeper, when the latter returned to the parlor on some little errand, "now tell me what you really do think of this mystery."

"I did tell you," said the practical Mrs. Pole. "I told you as I thought Mr. Stuart had better go straight to the hotel and find out all about it for himself; and he has gone, and that is all there is to say about it."

"Oh! but it will be so long before he can get back! Two hours, at least, and three or four, if he should have anything like a long talk with this duplicate cousin, Randolph Hay. Oh, Poley, can't you tell me what do you make out of it?"

"Honey, I don't make nothing out of it. I can't make nothing out of it. I never could guess the easiest riddles. They allers give me the headache," replied Mrs. Pole.

"Oh, dear! it does seem so long and trying to wait," sighed Palma, as she resumed her stitching.

Mrs. Pole went out of the parlor. This was her clearing-up day, and she was busy in the bright little kitchen, scouring boards that were already clean, and polishing pans that were already bright.

But Palma had not so long to wait as she anticipated. In something less than two hours, and much sooner than she expected the return of her husband, the door opened, and Cleve Stuart entered the room.

She sprang up to meet him.

"So soon! Oh, I am so glad! Did you see him? Well? Well? Well? Is he really our cousin? Where is he? Why didn't you bring him?" she eagerly, breathlessly demanded.

"My dear little girl, one question at a time," replied Cleve Stuart, as he deliberately set down his hat, drew off his gloves, and seated himself in one of the armchairs.

"But tell me," pleaded Palma, really pale with suspense.

"Well, I have not seen the man," replied Cleve.

"No? Not seen him?" demanded Palma, with a look of surprise and disappointment.

"No. He was not in his room when I called at the hotel. But I left a note for him, asking him to call here for authentic news in answer to his advertisement."

"That was well done. So we may expect him here. Do you think he will come?"

"Of course he will come."

"Soon—to-day?"

"As soon as possible after getting my note, I think."

"Cleve, did you learn anything about him at the Stardash?"

"Oh, yes. He arrived three days ago, on the morning of the second of October. He registered as Randolph Hay, San Francisco, California."

"Why! just the same as the first Cousin Randolph Hay!"

"Exactly. So, you see, the mystery deepens. Here are two men who claim the very same name and personality, yet only one of them can be the real Randolph Hay; the other one is an impostor."

"But which is real, and which is false?"

"We cannot yet tell."

"And why should there be an impostor?"

"Because the stake of a great inheritance would tempt an unscrupulous man to risk reputation and liberty to win it," replied Cleve.

CHAPTER XLI

THE COUSINS MEET

At this moment there came a rap at the door.

"Come in," said Cleve Stuart.

A boy entered, and presented a card.

Stuart took it, and read:

RANDOLPH HAY

"Where is the gentleman?" he inquired.

"Waiting in the front hall," replied the boy.

"Show him up here."

The boy left the room.

"Is it Mr. Hay?" inquired Palma.

"Mr. Hay, or his counterfeit, my dear," replied Stuart.

A few minutes later the door opened again, and Ran Hay entered, escorted by the waiter boy, who showed him in, and then immediately retreated from the room.

It needed but a glance at the beautiful, dark face of Ran Hay, which seemed but a deeper-toned image of Palma's, to convince Cleve Stuart that here stood the genuine Cousin Randolph Hay.

"Mr. Hay, I presume?" said Stuart, going forward to meet the visitor.

"Yes. Mr. Stuart?" said Ran, with a pleasant smile.

"That is my name. And this lady is Mrs. Stuart—once Miss Hay," he said, leading the visitor to Palma.

"And my cousin. I am sure you are my cousin; my Uncle James' daughter," said Ran, delight in every tone of his sweet voice, in every glance of his dark eyes, in every line of his bright face.

"Yes; I am Palma, and, ah! so glad to meet a kinsman! I doubted whether you were my kinsman until I saw you; but I have no doubt now I look at you," she answered, warmly, giving him smile for smile.

"And you might be brother and sister—twin brother and sister—from the close resemblance between you!" exclaimed Cleve Stuart, looking from one lovely dark face to the other, and inviting his guest, by a gesture of his hand, to take a seat.

"This is the promptest and heartiest recognition of my true identity that I have received since I came to the city. Every one else, though they welcomed me politely in honor of the letters I bore, met me, at first, with a little suspicion," said Ran as he seated himself. "As why should they not," he continued, "when I came bearing the name and claiming the position of a gentleman whom they had just seen off to Europe on his bridal trip? How is it, my dear little cousin, that you receive me, at once, without question?"

"I don't know, Randolph, unless it is from instinct—intuition; but though I never saw you before, I certainly

do recognize your claims to relationship, and rejoice in recognizing them," warmly replied Palma.

"You, sir—you take me on trust, also?" inquired Ran, turning with a smile to his host.

"Why, certainly. Your strong likeness to my wife goes far to prove your kinship," said Stuart; "though," he added, thoughtfully, "there is undoubtedly something that needs explanation in this affair. Are there two Randolph Hays? If so, which is the heir of Haymore? If not, who, then, is the gentleman bearing that name now on a voyage across the Atlantic?"

Ran paused a moment before he answered all these questions. Then he said:

"There is but one Randolph Hay, and that is myself. I am the heir of Haymore. The man bearing my name, now on his way to Europe, is a thief, a traitor and an assassin, who shot me down at night in the Black Wilderness of California, left me for dead and came here to personate me and claim my inheritance."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Cleve Stuart.

Palma listened and gazed in silent dismay.

"And doubtless he would have succeeded in keeping my inheritance but for the Providence that led to the discovery of my body before it was quite dead, and before the wolves had destroyed it. But it is a long story, and possibly you may have some engagement this morning," said Ran.

"No, no!" eagerly replied both Cleve and Palma in a breath; "we have not. We have nothing of the sort."

"Do stay and spend the day with us," added Cleve.

"Oh, yes! do, do! Here, give me your hat," exclaimed Palma, taking Ran's soft black felt "wide-awake," and hanging it on the tree.

Ran looked from host to hostess, smiled frankly, and saying:

"I should really like to do so very much. I should enjoy it greatly; but——"

"Well?" inquired Stuart, pleasantly.

"How do I know but that I should be taking undue advantage of your kindness?"

"Bosh, my dear fellow. Unless you yourself have some better plan for the day, we should be very happy to have

your company and hear your story. There! look at your cousin's face and see whether we speak in sincerity or only in conventional politeness," said Cleve, triumphantly.

Ran glanced at Palma's eager countenance, her parted lips, her dancing eyes, and broke into a frank, boyish laugh, exclaiming:

"Why, really, now, I do believe you are glad to see your rough California cousin, and are willing to keep him all day long!"

"All the week, all the month, all the year, all your life, if you will," exclaimed impulsive Palma.

"All right," laughed Ran; "then I will stay to-day, certainly, with thanks."

And he drew off his gloves, put them in his pocket, and lay back in his chair, to show that he was gladly and gratefully making himself at home.

"And now for your story, Cousin Randolph. You can't say with the knife-grinder, 'Bless you, sir, I have no story to tell,' for we know that you have a strange one," said Palma.

"Are you sure I shall not bore you?" inquired Ran.

"No," replied Palma, "of course I am not sure that it will not bore me. How can I be sure that it will not tire me half to death until I can find out what sort of a narrator you are?"

"Then you had better not tempt me."

"Oh! I am willing to take the risk."

"And you, sir?" said Ran, turning to Stuart.

"I am really very anxious to hear your account of yourself, Hay," earnestly replied his host.

So encouraged, Ran Hay settled himself back in his cushioned armchair and commenced the story of his life as it is already so well known to our readers.

Both his cousins gave their most sympathetic attention to his tale of vicissitudes and adventures.

Palma listened with ready tears and smiles. She wept at the description of the father's tragic death, and the son's destitute and desolate condition, and cruel privations and sufferings until he drifted into the mining camp of Grizzly Gulch, where among the rough miners he found much kindness, and later plenty of work.

She laughed at his description of No-Man's Mike, al-

though loyal Ran had not the least intention of holding up his faithful friend and prospective brother-in-law to be "made fun of."

She rejoiced at the sudden discovery of his heirship to the great Yorkshire manor. She shuddered at the attempted murder in the black woods. She smiled in delight at the goodness and kindness of the people about the fort who had rescued Ran's body from the wild beasts and had nursed him back to life. She glowed with admiration at the devotion and heroism of Judy in following the traces of her lover through the long black woods until she found him at the end in the fort.

"I like your Judy best of all. Oh, I like her so much! I love her, Randolph. And I mean to be not only a cousin, but a true sister to her. She is the gem of gems! Now, why should she be left at the fort? Why may she not come here and live with us, and have a daily governess? Even I could help her with her education," said Palma, enthusiastically.

"Thank you earnestly, dear cousin. If your husband should approve, this plan may be thought of," said Ran, gratefully.

"I am sure to approve of any plan that Palma favors," added Cleve, heartily.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Ran.

"This adventurer, this Delamere, or Gentleman Geff, or whatever he was, played a very desperate game for very high stakes and had very nearly won them," murmured Cleve Stuart, musing on all that he had heard.

"Yes," assented Ran, "he had very nearly won. I had the narrowest possible escape with my life. But, in point of fact, his game was not as desperate as you think. The chances of his success, if you come to look at them, were a thousand to one against his failure. There was the place, the deep, lonely wilderness; the time, the dead of night; the surroundings, hungry, wild beasts everywhere; the manner of the crime, the victim shot down and left for dead, with the apparent certainty of being devoured by the famished wolves before morning; discovery improbable, identification impossible. Don't you see? But for the opportune finding of me by the hunter, Longman, almost immediately after I was shot down, Gentleman Geff's crime

could never have been discovered, and he would have lived in affluence as the Squire of Haymore Manor, most probably loved and respected by all who knew him, and at last died in the odor of sanctity, for all we know."

"Instead of which he will probably live in penal servitude and die in some prison," added Cleve Stuart.

"Not if any forebearance on my part can save him from the consequences of his crime," said Ran.

"Why should you wish to save him?" demanded Cleve Stuart, with some severity.

"In pity for his poor young wife. I feel very sorry for her. It is sad that she should suffer, poor, innocent young creature!"

Cleve Stuart broke into a bitter, sardonic laugh.

"Now, what's the matter with you?" demanded Ran, raising his eyebrows.

"Your poor, innocent young creature is a mature woman of the world, an adventuress like her accomplished husband. Let us dismiss her. Now, what do the Wallings say about your claim?"

"Oh! they say that the evidence of my identity as next of kin to the late squire and as heir-at-law to the Haymore Manor, are perfectly satisfactory to them, and that they are quite unquestionable; although, of course, there will be some forms of law to go through before my adversary can be ejected and myself put in possession."

"Of course," assented Cleve Stuart, "and I hope that his ejection from the estate will be the forerunner of his introduction to the State prison."

"No," said Ran, gravely, "so far as I am concerned, he may go scot-free. If it depend on me, he shall never be prosecuted either for fraud or for assault."

"What! My dear fellow! You would let a villain like that escape punishment?" exclaimed Stuart.

"Yes; if it lay with me to do so," stoutly replied Ran.

"But forbearance toward this man would be injustice toward the community."

"I don't see that. He wronged me, not the community. And I have not only the right to condone his offense, but the duty to do so," persisted Ran.

"Oh, well! If you adduce the Scriptural argument, I have no more to say," gravely replied Stuart.

"But now I have something more to say on another subject, or rather, perhaps, on another branch of this subject," said Ran. And then he paused, and looked from Cleve to Palma.

They said nothing, but they seemed attentive, and Ran resumed:

"When I advertised for news of my relatives it was not from curiosity, nor even was it altogether from the promptings of natural family affection. It was from a sense of right—a wish to do justice to my cousins."

"'Justive!'" repeated Stuart, in a tone of inquiry that Palma's questioning look abetted.

"Yes—justice. Attend to me for one moment. When I first heard that there was another Randolph Hay claiming my rightful estate, I did not suspect fraud. I really thought that the man was the son of my Uncle James—thought so the more readily because Randolph is a name that often recurs in our pedigree."

"Ah!" muttered Cleve Stuart.

"So I believed that the claim had been put forward in good faith and in ignorance of my existence and my prior rights. With my mind prepossessed of this theory, I came to New York, with the intention of seeking my own, certainly, but also with another additional intention of dividing my estate, when I should have taken possession of it, with my supposed kinsman, the other Randolph Hay."

"That would have been a most quixotic piece of magnanimity, if you could have carried out your intentions, my dear fellow. But don't you know—of course you must know now, if you did not before—that the Haymore estate is entailed and cannot be alienated, either in whole or in part?" inquired Cleve Stuart.

"Oh, yes, I know that; and I have always known it—at least, as long as I have known anything about the Manor of Haymore. I did not allude to the land when I spoke of dividing the property. I meant the vast personal in the coal mines, the railways, and so on. These I meant to divide with my supposed kinsman, giving him the larger share to compensate for the share of the land which entail debarred him from; for I do not believe in this cruel law of primogeniture which gives everything to the elder and nothing to the younger sons."

"Well, but your magnanimous designs were frustrated when you discovered that the fraudulent claimant was not your unknown kinsman, but your much too well-known comrade and assassin," said Stuart.

"They were frustrated in that direction only to be turned into a much better and pleasanter one," said Ran, with a bow and a smile for Palma.

Cleve Stuart looked up inquiringly.

"It was after that discovery that I determined to seek out my cousins; and in pursuance of my object, inserted the advertisement, which you answered this morning, Mr. Stuart."

"Oh, I am so glad! So glad you sought us out, Cousin Randolph!" heartily exclaimed Palma, who was utterly unsuspicious of the generous intentions of the young heir toward herself.

"Thank you, dear Palma. So am I glad; very glad. My life is enriched by the discovery and knowledge of my dear cousins," said Ran, warmly, glancing from the bright face of Palma to that of Cleve, as if to include him also in the claim of a happy relationship. "But," he continued, "as I said before, it was not from the yearnings of family affection alone that I sought out my kindred, but from the sense of right, the love of justice. Though my Uncle James left no son, as I had supposed he did, yet he left a daughter, thank Heaven! And that daughter, in right and justice, if not in law, is entitled to a large portion of her grandfather's estate."

"Cousin Randolph, I—I don't understand. What—what do you mean?" exclaimed the surprised and bewildered young woman.

"I mean, dear Palma, to settle on you one-half of our grandfather's personal property. It will amount—your share I mean—to four thousand pounds, or twenty thousand dollars a year. You may not need it, dear——"

"Oh, no, indeed. I do not need it. Cleve is quite well off. He has one of the richest old plantations on the Mississippi, extending miles along the river. And we live so simply and plainly that I am sure we do not spend one-tenth of his income," earnestly answered Palma, speaking in perfect good faith, and in utter ignorance of the ruin wrought in Stuart's fortunes by the civil war.

The reader will remember that, in tenderness to her, he had always concealed the fact of his poverty, and the desperate expedients to which he was put to supply their daily needs, but Cleve Stuart never knew before how perfectly successful he had been in this secrecy.

"Whether you need it or not, it is yours by right, my dear cousin, and you must have it," said Ran, firmly.

"Indeed, Mr. Hay, we cannot accept your very magnanimous and too impulsive offer. It would lay us under much too heavy an obligation," said Cleve Stuart, earnestly.

Ran regarded him with mock gravity for a moment, and then replied:

"I am very sorry, I am sure. But I cannot help it. You will have to try to bear the burden." Then, more seriously, he said:

"Look here, Mr. Stuart. I hold the law of primogeniture to be a hideously unjust and cruel one. And I do not mean to abide by it when I have the power of departing from it. Now here are the two of us—your wife and myself. We are own cousins—the children of two brothers, with only eighteen months between their ages, my father being just that little the elder. We are the grandchildren of the late squire, and the sole surviving descendants of the old family of the Hays of Haymore. By the laws of primogeniture, I, being the heir, inherit everything. But, in justice, I and my cousin should be equal co-heirs. Now I propose to set the law of primogeniture right by the law of justice. I mean to settle the full half of our grandfather's personal property on my Cousin Palma, whether you like it or not, and no one can or shall prevent my doing so. 'D'ye moind?' as Mike would say."

Before either Cleve or Palma could reply, the door opened, and Mrs. Pole entered to light the gas and lay the cloth for dinner.

When the room was illuminated, Palma called to the housekeeper:

"Come here, Poley, dear. I want you to know my dear, new-found cousin."

Mrs. Pole extinguished her wax-lighter and came up.

"Cousin Randolph," said Palma, "we are plain people, and don't care a rush for ceremony, conventionality, distinctions of rank, or any other such nonsense. This is my

dear friend, nurse, housekeeper and almost mother—Mrs. Mary Pole. And, Poley, this is my dear, new-found cousin, Mr. Randolph Hay," said Palma, beaming on both parties.

Ran stood up, and offered his hand to the elderly woman, saying:

"I am very glad to see you, ma'am."

"So am I you!" cheerily responded the housekeeper. "And mighty proud that these two young people have found out a real relation, sir. It did seem as if they was nothing to nobody on the face of the earth."

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Ran, with a smile.

Then Mrs. Pole went back to her business, and arranged the dinner on the table, and invited the party to take their seats.

It was a very simple repast, more in keeping with Cleve Stuart's real condition than with Palma's imaginary income.

But the three young people enjoyed it vastly.

When they had freely discussed the baked fowl and potatoes that formed the first course, and the rice pudding and roast apples that formed the second, and had finished with a cup of coffee all around, Ran Hay was moved to invite his cousin to go with him to the Academy of Music, where a celebrated *prima donna* was to play "Norma."

Cleve glanced at Palma, and saw that she was eager to have this plesure. So he frankly accepted the invitation for himself and his wife.

They went to the opera, and enjoyed the music as only the young and enthusiastic can enjoy such delights.

After the opera, Ran insisted on their going with him to a first-class restaurant, where he entertained them at an elegant little supper.

An hour later, at twelve midnight, he bade good-night to his cousins at the door of their own house.

In that moment when there seemed to be no room for sadness, the clouds of trouble were already gathering on the horizon.

The sequel to this story is published complete in one volume entitled, "For Whose Sake," and bound in cloth uniform with this volume.

THE END

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Take it all in all, "Horseshoe Robinson" is a work which should be found on every book-shelf, not only because it is a most entertaining story, but because of the wealth of valuable information concerning the colonists which it contains. That it has been brought out once more, well illustrated, is something which will give pleasure to thousands who have long desired an opportunity to read the story again, and to the many who have tried vainly in these latter days to procure a copy that they might read it for the first time.

THE PEARL OF ORR'S ISLAND. A story of the Coast of Maine. By Harriet Beecher Stowe. Cloth, 12mo. Illustrated. Price, $1.00.

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Who can read of the beginning of that sweet life, named Mara, which came into this world under the very shadow of the Death angel's wings, without having an intense desire to know how the premature bud blossomed? Again and again one lingers over the descriptions of the character of that baby boy Mosea, who came through the tempest, amid the angry billows, pillowed on his dead mother's breast.

There is no more faithful portrayal of New England life than that which Mrs. Stowe gives in "The Pearl of Orr's Island."

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